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UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Faculty of Divinity

M.Th. Thesis

A CHINESE CHRISTIAN READING OF CHRISTOLOGY

MARK STONE (SHI YONGSHENG)

MAY 2000

Supervisor: Prof. George Newlands

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Introduction

In the constant process of world secularisation, Christianity seems to be gradually losing its divine authority, and is increasingly regarded as merely a branch of worldly religions. This is the case not only among non-Christians; even some radical theologians describe the traditional Trinity and Christology as the superstitious conception of human-created religion. So, they spare no effort to overthrow the so-called “idol of Christianity”; that is, a personal God "up there" or "out there." They say this god is dead, or candidly say he does not exist, and that his Son Jesus had lived in Palestine as an ordinary complete human being. Under the guise of criticism, they have established new systems of thought and describe Christ as the new "superman", "great hero" and "incarnate spirit". Indeed, nowadays we can find many and varied strange individual models that stand against tradition, custom and history.

All these new achievements should be attributed to the liberal theologians who dare to destroy the traditional doctrine through their search for the historical Jesus and kerygma, according to their scepticism about the Gospel. The Chalcedonian Christological Jesus Christ is filtered and his true perfect divine nature, for example, incarnation, virgin birth, resurrection, ascension and advent (including his miracles) destroyed by demythologisation. Up until the present, some radical liberal scholars harshly repudiate the authority of Chalcedon because they believe it comes from the source of several different documents that consist of Palestinian Aramaic Christology, Hellenistic Jewish Christology, Samaritan Gnostic Christology and Gentile Christology. Their purpose is that eliminating the transcendent almighty God in heaven, they intend to innovate a human paradigm.

If we deny Jesus Christ's divinity, if we deny his position of Son of God, if we deny the Apostles' Creed, then consequently we must deny the New Testament that provides the precise evidence for the two complete natures of Incarnation. If so, what does Christian theological construction depend on? A story? A kind of metaphysical contemplation or psychological analysis? The organizations of churches on the earth? Even some human arbitrary assumptions? There were countless stories, theories and organizations in history over the last two thousand years, but they were only as twinkling colour clouds. However, Christianity not only continues to exist, but has constantly been increasing and developing and spreading widely over the world from its insignificant origin in Palestine.

Christians' actual spiritual experiences witness to our Triune God who is a real and living God, who himself acts his mighty work within his church. Even though we cannot see and touch the invisible Creator, Controller and Saviour by human limited faculty, God reveals himself to, and communicates himself with, humankind through the incarnate Word Jesus Christ and the Inspirer and Counsellor the Holy Spirit. From the Son of God who became flesh and dwelt in the world, we can derive the complete attributes of God, who is love, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, compassion, meekness, righteousness, forgiveness, holiness and power. It is because of God directly intervening in human history that humankind really begins to be transformed step by step, from barbarity to civilization. Christians particularly imitate the archetype of Jesus to appeal for and participate in the movements of social peace, justice and aid that both make good witnesses to the Gospel and attack and defeat evil.

Of course someone may ask how we may know the image of Jesus Christ who was the Son of God precisely at the same time as he was the Son of Man. Do we describe his figure only according to the New Testament? Our answer is yes, absolutely! But biblical scholars have

suggested some questions of biblical accuracy that challenge the authority and infallibility of the Bible. We must admit that some paragraphs and words in the scripture are quite difficult and obscure to apprehend alone by literal meaning for theologians and laymen. However, we should definitely believe that “all Scripture is God-breathed” and is recorded by God's servants who are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, when we understand and explain the spiritual meaning, we cannot quote out of context or by the letter. For Christians, the most important interpretation is exegesis by the Spirit, “for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” As St. Paul says, “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words”. This does not mean that the Gospel cannot be understood through human language, but that only under the guidance of the Spirit can human beings transparently recognize Jesus Christ who was not merely Son of Man, but also Son of God.

Christology is completely founded on the fact that the Word of God became flesh and the incarnate God was crucified for human sins to accomplish salvation, and also was resurrected from the dead to bring about the eschatological future for all human beings. In Christology Incarnation is the original source of the construction of Christian theology. Without God's humble descent to the world, we cannot speak of the concrete image and character of God and his salvific work and his community on earth.

It is because God appeared himself to humankind in spatio-temporal history that we can think, speak and accept the Christology, in which the historical Jesus of Nazareth was both the Son of God and the Son of David, whose true perfect divinity and true perfect humanity made him become the archetype of all human beings, and through his mission, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, opened a new way for sinners to approach God.

After the enlightenment, Kant's critical philosophy affords a new conception of the value of estimating tradition. Following this influence, liberal theology radically attacked traditional Christian orthodox Christology. They call with a high voice for a "return to the Jesus of history", in which they overstate the humanity of Jesus Christ and omit his divinity, as their idealistic purpose is that all human beings imitate the paragon and then the Kingdom of God can be realized in the world. The consequence is that their idealistic humanism leads to more and more people (including Christians) having difficulty believing and accepting that the central concepts of the Gospel are Incarnation, Virgin birth, Miracles, Resurrection and Ascension.

Although Neo-orthodox theology spares no effort in its fight against the too humanized theology and to reconstruct the traditional orthodoxy in order to keep and sustain pure Christian faith, the constant secularisation and materialism of the western church causes human beings to be lost to the secular world, which makes the church lose the dynamic living spiritual life and also makes God feel regret for the sad phenomenon that many church buildings have become historical cultural relics only as visiting places.

Today's Christology appears in various forms by the impact of the change of philosophy, science and human environment, but not every kind yields interest for the church, and even some theories are rather ridiculous. Which kind of Christology does the church need to provide rich spiritual life and to call God's sons and daughters back to his community?

I think the faithful Christ and the historical Jesus should be identical and cannot be separated and divided into two persons (Christ in heaven and Jesus on earth). His perfect human nature

and perfect divine nature should be similarly described and proclaimed in the church and theology. Thus, we can learn from him and imitate his archetypal being to achieve the aim, so that we should be concerned for the world in the same way Jesus Christ helped those weak, sick, abandoned, depressed and suffering human beings. More importantly, we must emphasize the dynamic living spiritual life, which we expect in the eschatological future, just as Jesus Christ possessed rich life in the Heavenly Father and warned his disciples that his Kingdom does not belong to this world. He required of Christians that they should wait for the New Holy City where he will dwell and live together with all human beings who are chosen by his precious blood.

Although Incarnation is the keystone of Christianity, certain too radical modern theologians claim that we should abolish the term incarnation because it is supernatural myth that comes from Jewish apocalyptic literature and Hellenistic myth. So, we must cautiously investigate "the Word of God become flesh". Who or what is the Word of God after all? Is the word of God identical with the Logos in Judaism, in Hellenism and in Pagan mythology? Did the Word become flesh by humanity or by divinity? Who or what did the Word become? Karl Rahner, through his transcendent anthropology, inherits the classical scholastic tradition while developing the doctrine of transcendent Christology, elucidating God's self-communication of Christ and God's revelation through Christ in the cosmos of evolution.

"Return to the historical Jesus", the slogan shouted over one hundred years, undoubtedly attracted many scholars to track back to the earliest church researching the Nazarene Jesus, his life, his teaching and his community. Studying history can today help human beings to find the historical evidence and to recognize that Jesus' story is true fact, never fabricated by any people. But liberal theologians announce that Jesus was merely an ordinary human being

like all common people, and he essentially had no divinity. It is no a surprise because some repudiated Christ's position as the Son of God from the beginning of the early church. It is worth reminding some secularised theologians of this, who lay all secular things of human beings in the world upon Jesus Christ. They does not respect the Lord, whom we should worship, but seriously profane his holy name. Barth and Pannenberg strongly attack this tendency and stress that Jesus Christ shows completely the humanity of God in which he does everything according to God's free love, but not to any human demand, for he became a human being as our neighbour, confirming that he possessed truly perfect human essence, but never ceased to be God.

In the Chalcedonian creed, hypostatic union is obscurely difficult to understand and accept. Of course, we must go back to that historical background, and then we can catch hold of the meaning of the term "Anhypostasis" that was initiated by Cyril of Alexandria who opposed Nestorius. In order to criticize the monophysitism of Eutyches, Leo I wrote the Pope's Hal in order to emphatically state "Hypostasis" in the council of Chalcedon. But this creed did not end the controversy about Christology, for Leontius of Byzantium contributed his new term "Enhypostasis". Up until the present, the controversy of the two natures of Jesus Christ still continues among modern theologians. However, Barth insists that Christ's human nature exists only in the event of the *Unio Hypostatica*, which he elaborates as "very God and very Man", "humiliation and exaltation".

Confronted with the challenges of theology (essentially about Christology) from two aspects such as secular theologians and atheists, Christianity has been seriously impacted, particularly after the Second World War. Theologians intend to establish their theology but have no way to escape the criticism of these challenges. Here I exemplify the representative of modern

western theology, K. Rahner (the transcendental). Through his reconsideration and reconstruction of Christology, we can perhaps try to find some enlightenment for the future of Christology.

How does Chinese theology respond to the challenge? Some awakened Christian scholars are thinking of the theology that can be fit for the flourishing development of the present church. The construction of Chinese theology cannot follow the old way of western theology, yet should from its own circumstance seek its own theology. So, we must pay attention to Chinese traditional culture from which we can derive abundant thought to benefit to Christian theology. Then we will devote a lot of space to investigate the relationship of Christology and Chinese culture, especially, on the topic of the Word (Tao) and God (Heaven). We do not copy mechanically all the meaning of Tao and Heaven, and choose the essence of Chinese culture to help us understand Christology. Perhaps we can regard the Way as the contextualisation of Chinese theology, and it will be like Black Theology, Grass Theology, Struggle Theology and Ming Jung Theology, which let people be Christians in their own contextual background. When the unchangeable stream of Chinese traditional culture contributes to Christianity, it must bring a more vigorous dynamic to Christian theology, particularly to the foundation of theology—Christology.

However, it is not enough to only depend on Chinese culture, but as a Chinese Christian, I should connect the western Christological thinking with Chinese theology. Even though there do not appear many theological giants like Barth and Rahner in China, the weather-beaten Chinese Church possesses rich spiritual experience that encourages and impels the church developing with a thriving and prosperous picture. How can we imagine the Chinese Church surviving in the barbarous persecution of a long-term? This is the reason why I disclose a

brief description of traditional Chinese culture, and Chinese theology (mainly about Christology). The important problem of the Chinese Church is always surrounded by how to realize indigenisation in the church. Different theologians go different ways. In the main, there several tendencies exist. These are: John Sung's charismaticism, Jia Yuming's fundamentalism, Chao Zichen's Chinese culture, Wu Yaozong's social gospel and K. H. Ting's cosmic Christ. Their achievement and the experience of the universal church will enrich traditional theology and I hope this will help and stimulate the western church to renew and resurrect itself.

The purpose of this research is that we can precisely understand and grasp the cornerstone of Christian faith and we can steadfastly stand in a Christian position when we are seriously threatened and challenged by the constant secularisation in the contemporary world; furthermore we can overcome the secularised tide through the Word of God and in the new century we can embody the plenty of grace in Christ from different cultures.

Chapter One: Challenges to the Classical version: Rahner and the transcendental

The central focus of Karl Rahner's theology is theological anthropology. He believes that anthropology can affirmatively clarify Christology because Christ became flesh and is perfectly possessed of human nature. Transcendental anthropology makes us able directly to understand the unity of God's substance with human nature, which is in historical space and time, and through love, it self-obeds the Word of God to achieve the fulfilment of its intrinsic substance. In fact, the Christ who owns the knowledge of free human nature and self-consciousness is the mysterious being, in which his person unites with the unlimited mystery and the highest form of unity. He is precisely the unity of substance.

When we say the Word really became flesh to manifest himself in human nature, scholastic theology maintains that this “ontological becoming” limits the humanity of Christ, and that the limited unchangeable divinity of the Word cannot experience the change. On this most controversial question, Rahner's point is very different from the scholastic traditional one. He un-disguisedly claims that the Word of God truly became flesh and during the process of Incarnation God himself truly experienced change. However, God does not change in himself; change happens in the other person who demonstrates that one with symbol—Jesus Christ is true humanity. According to this dialectical opinion, Rahner suggests that God really suffers on the cross, and during the evolution of human history, God participates in it through himself and thus also changes. Therefore, Rahner's Christology contrasts with the scholastic Thomist view, for he insists that God truly takes place in relation with the world, and this intimately relates to that which forms his whole theological thought. His transcendental theological anthropology is constructed on the thought of Thomism, and at the

same time absorbs the elements of Hegel's philosophy of absolute spirit, and Heidegger's existentialism.

Therefore, Rahner approaches Christology by many paths in order to comprehend it more intelligibly and integratively. We can understand how he conceives his transcendental Christology from these aspects: (1) Mystery; (2) Symbolic theology; (3) Transcendental anthropology; (4) Self-communication in evolution; (5) Christ and non-Christian religions. Rahner's theology both defends orthodox doctrine and breaks out of outdated scholastic irrational rules and customs; his boldly initiating spirit exploits a new way for the future of Christology.

1.1 *Mystery*

Mystery is a relative truth. Human beings cannot understand it only by reason, but if they come into the Kingdom of God can comprehend by faith. That is not to say reason and faith are completely contradictory, but only with the precondition of faith can human beings intrinsically recognize the mystery by reason. Rahner's understanding synthetically links Christian mystery with human reason. Because God as the aim of human will, is the superior mystery, even though God's subjective knowledge is the condition that humans can understand it, no limited human ever recognizes God by himself. Thus, God always reveals the holy mystery to the blessed spirit in the Kingdom of Heaven, and the blessed vision depends on the closest approach to the unlimited mystery, not on recognition of it. When the human spirit is elevated to the supernatural realm where God dwells in the mysterious sphere, the ability of human recognition of God's revelation is very necessary, and the mysterious

God can be recognized only through the ability of the human spirit self-obediently loving God.

Christianity reveals all individual mystery, which is the external form in which the unlimited mystery self-initiatively reveals himself to the historical human being. Humankind is possessed of sociality, historicity and spirituality; it has a metaphysical constitution and can recognize God. This is the reason why the Word of God as mediator participates in human history and entrusts his revelation and grace to his perfect historical church—the salvific community. Following this, Rahner suggests that Trinity, Incarnation and Grace are the central mystery of Christianity, and the three are the undivided and united element which the holy mystery self-communicates to human beings in history and through them leads a return to the holy mystery himself in love.

Rahner furthermore recognizes that mystery and spirit are immediately interrelated. The spirit can comprehend the incomprehensible thing, and endeavours to transcend the comprehensive actual object and to achieve the preconceptive comprehension of the absolute. As spirit is the most original and fundamental previous light, it can become the ultimate transcendent condition for the possibility of recognition. Thus, the characteristic of spirit is the prechoreisis of knowledge and love regarded as existence—in experience we recognize the interdependent relation of knowledge and will, insight and love. Knowledge only exists in being and being recognizes itself by love. As for rational transcendence, Rahner considers when knowledge is understood as the stimulant and potentiality in love, it must be the potentiality of welcoming invisible great insight, absorbed-in, and sacrificially obedient in the exaltation of love. So, spirit in love accepts mystery to itself and achieves itself perfection. Therefore Rahner sets forth that there are these three mysteries in Christianity,

...no more and no fewer, and the three mysteries affirm the same thing: that God has imparted himself to us through Jesus Christ in his Spirit as he is in himself, so that the inexpressible nameless mystery which reigns in us and over us should be in itself the immediate blessedness of the spirit which knows, and transforms itself into love (T.I., IV, p. 73).

Furthermore, Rahner maintains that mystery and grace are also immediately interrelated. Because the self-communication of mystery always appears as a kind of grace, the human being elevated by holy grace, is a spiritual being, and the being coming directly into the blessed vision of supernatural grace is ultimately the blessed vision or the precondition of its being in existence. God's incomprehensibility becomes the necessity of the directly demonstrating transcendence, for God is absolute holy mystery. Yet God's incomprehensible knowledge must be one of positive attribution of immediate knowledge. The pilgrim who is strange to the vision of God can gain understanding of the absolute mystery characteristic of God. Because he knows the holy mystery is unapproachable, God's incomprehensibility is his (revealing) vision and blessedness of love when he really sees God. Thus, the vision of grace and blessedness is only understood as, respectively the possibility and reality of the holy mystery immediately demonstrated.

We can recognize that Rahner's discussion of mystery discloses God as the incomprehensible mysterious Being reveals himself in the vision of grace, blessedness, love, spirit and knowledge. Actually all these revelations are embodied in the Word of God—Jesus Christ—who completely realizes God's self-communication by his dwelling in the world. It is through him that human beings can recognize, comprehend and experience the holy mystery that is both absolutely invisible mystery and completely apparent mystery.

1.2 *Symbolic Theology*

Symbol is a particular existence that is another kind of appearance, expression and phenomenon of its creator. From his transcendental anthropology, Rahner deduced that every being as a unity is possessed of various existential states, and the plurality specially extended by the original unity, which constitutes that plurality, is identical with its source by way of response to its origin. As it belongs to its original identity, it is its original expression. Although according to its existential degree, every being more or less by itself constitutes the thing that is distinguished from itself, its self-realization is still identical with itself. This then becomes the distinctive being and is also the original being. It is identical with the extended plurality, thus the extended identity is just the expression of being. Rahner claims,

...every being as such possesses a plurality as an intrinsic element of its significant unity; this plurality constitutes itself, by virtue of its origin from an original unity, as the way to fulfil the unity (or on account of the unity already perfect), in such a way that that which is originated and different is in agreement with its origin and hence has (at least in a 'specificative', if not always in a 'repudicative' sense) the character of expression or 'symbol' with regard to its origin (T.I. IV, P.229).

Therefore we can derive the conclusion: being is itself a symbol, for it must express itself.

Moreover, Rahner explains that being itself constitutes plurality which leads to the perfection of being, or which under certain states is indeed the reality of being possessing the perfect. The self-constitutive moving process is the possible condition that being self-possesses in knowledge and love. Being self-expressing itself as the "other" expresses the reality that is the intrinsic self-reality of being. According to Rahner's statement,

...as a being realizes itself in its own intrinsic 'otherness' (which is constitutive of its being), retentive of its intrinsic plurality (which is contained in its self-realization) as its derivative and congruous expression, it makes itself known... The being is known in this symbol, without which it cannot be known at all: thus, it is a symbol in the original (transcendental) sense of the word (T.I. IV, p.231).

Rahner directly applies the ontological symbol to the orthodox theology that formulates his symbolic theology. As to the Trinity, Rahner regards the Logos as the Word of the Holy

Father, his perfect image, his sealed mark, his irradiated light and his self-expression. The eternal Word, as the reality of intrinsic holy life, is begotten by the Holy Father and completely possesses the Father's image and expression. The process of incarnation is identical with the holy activity of self-recognition, and without the process, the Holy One, who self-possesses absolute activity, impossibly exists in recognition. The Holy Father contrasts with his image; the substance remains the same, but the person different. From the opinion that the Logos is the symbol of the Holy Father, we can deduce that the intrinsic symbol and the different intrinsic symbol expressed with symbol are constituted by the expressed symbol, which both expresses itself and possesses itself. In other words, the Logos expresses the Holy Father and possesses the substance of the Holy Father.

On Christology, Rahner perceives the reality expressed with symbol is the Incarnation. The Logos is God's image, feature, picture, shadow and dignity, completely satisfactory for God's perfection. In this world, incarnation is God's absolute real symbol, which not merely expresses God, but also reveals God to the world in him. In accordance with his transcendental anthropology, Rahner argues that Christ's humanity really expresses the Logos: in the most clear-minded perception, it is the symbolic reality and not a complete different thing from the Logos and its reality. His humanity is in fact the self-expression of the Logos, when God expresses himself and makes himself concrete. Therefore, Logos as the Son of the Holy Father is precisely the revelative symbol in his humanity, and in the Son, the Father demonstrates himself to all creatures, for the symbol describes the present revealed things.

1.3 *Transcendental Anthropology*

The most important element in the development of Rahner's Christology comes from his transcendental anthropological concept of "man's active transcendence of himself" as a created reality. He understands the concept from two aspects: the relationship between matter and spirit, and God's constant activity in his creation. For Rahner, spirit is essentially different from matter, but because both are created by God, the difference between them cannot be an absolute one; matter and spirit constitute the same reality, and thus, there is a close affinity and an inseparable unity between them. As a result of this, the possibility exists that matter may become spirit.

According to Rahner's elaboration, in any attempt to understand myself as a man in my spiritual nature, I am able to recognize that I am not exclusively concerned in my knowledge and freedom with the categorical data of my world, but that, as the condition of the possibility of this activity and these experiences, there must also be a reality which makes it possible for me to carry out this concrete activity. It is God as the other reality who is unlimited, infinite and absolute, dwelling in me and making it possible for me to associate with the categorical world, yet essentially different from me. Rahner regards metaphysical causality as the transcendental activity of God, even though it can be described as a cause that nevertheless enables me to bring about what is brought about.

Thereby Rahner affirmatively deduces that from the phenomenon of transcendental experience, I am more in every spiritually conscious activity than the categorical activity itself. In other words, I transcend myself, and this transcendental aspect that is present in all my spiritual activities makes the transcendental experience possible. It is, therefore, possible to understand the self-transcendence of a being that occurs within the evolutionary process in the light of this original knowledge of what is its metaphysical cause. Here, Rahner

emphasizes that by reason of the direct relation of the human soul with God, a human being transcends himself only through the power of God, which is contained within his activity but does not form a constituent part of his being. At the same time Rahner affirms that the transcendence of God's activity with relation to the world, should never be seen as a merely static bearing up of the world, on the contrary, it forms the basis and motivation of this world precisely as a world that is in a constant state of becoming, by transcending itself.

In considering the "idea of Christ" on the principle of transcendental anthropology, Rahner indicates that we can gain from it the a priori structure of man. Man is at the same time a corporeal historical being of the earth and a being of absolute transcendence. He therefore looks out, in his history, to see whether he cannot find the highest fulfilment of his being and his expectations, in which his concept of the absolute is fulfilled, and his way of seeing is made clear. Both point in the direction of the absolute God. Man is therefore in this sense the one who can expect the free epiphany of God in his history. That epiphany is indeed Jesus Christ. Rahner's transcendental Christology expounds that man expects, with an inner transcendental necessity, God's historical promise to be fulfilled in him.

1.4 *God's Self-Communication in Evolution*

Rahner suggests the concept of "self-communication" which ontologically responds to human substantial existence, the existence that is for itself existence, and the existence that in self-consciousness and freedom he is responsible for himself. God's communication means that,

...what is communicated is really God in his own being, and in this way it is a communication for the sake of knowing and possessing God in immediate vision and love. This self-communication means precisely that objectivity of gift and communication which is the climax of subjectivity on the side of the one communicating and the one receiving (*Foundations of Christian Faith*, p.118).

Thereby God can himself commune with the godless in his reality, yet God is still the unlimited reality and the absolute mystery, and a human being is the limited existence different from God.

Rahner suggests that God's self-communication in grace occurs in human history when the evolutionary process reaches the stage of human consciousness and freedom. Then the salvific history in the proper sense begins, and this indicates the unique role of Jesus Christ in this history. With Rahner himself speaking,

This self-communication is necessarily addressed to a free history of the human race. It can take place only in a free acceptance by free subjects, and indeed in a common history, God's self-communication does not suddenly become acosmic, directed only to an isolated and individualized subjectivity. It affects the history of the human race and is addressed to all men in their intercommunication, for it is only therein and thereby that the acceptance of God's self-communication can take place historically (*Ibid.*, p.193).

To define Jesus Christ as a historical human being in space and time, proclaims the beginning of God's absolute self-communication and begins to offer self-communication to all human beings. Thus, we call the saviour 'the historical man'; subjectively demonstrating integrity, for it is in him that the self-communication achieves its climax. The climax is a moment of all human history; it is not identical with the integrity of the spiritual world's obedience to God's self-communication. As to self-communication, it must be understood as the part of God's freedom. As to the historical part, humankind must accept it, through self-communication and acceptance of it. Therefore, God's self-communication in history gains an irrevocable and unchangeable character. As to the moment of history, it has entered into its ultimate value; even in its beginning, its being longs for existence. Rahner refers to it thus:

...the whole movement of history exists for achieving the moment of the goal and climax of Jesus Christ's self-communication. It exists only for entering the fact makes it unchangeable and exists for the Saviour (T.I., VI, p.176).

Jesus of Nazareth, according to Rahner, in a spatio-temporal moment, came into the world in which he achieved the climax of self-communication. He became the mediator between God and human beings, and through linking with history, he completely demonstrates God to the world. In his total openness to God, this offer met with a free and perfect response, so that in his life and death, the history of grace reaches its irreversible and unsurpassable triumph over sin. Since the history of sin is the history of separation and alienation from God, the perfect union with God that he achieved in his free response, is the undoing of sin and the entrance into the history of salvation. Thus, spiritual creatures can transcend their limited reality to achieve God's transcendence by Christ's absolute self-communication.

1.5 *Christ and non-Christian Religions*

For the traditional view of Christianity, the universal salvific significance that Jesus Christ has achieved on the cross for all time and for all people is always a scandal for non-Christians. But because of parallel existing religions over thousands of years, it seems difficult to judge that there is no truth, goodness and revelation of God outside Christianity, and that all other religions are absolute absurdity and fallacy. Recently, there has been a tendency that more and more dogmatic theologians are putting the salvation of Jesus Christ into a relation with non-Christian religions through investigating the multiplicity of historical religions. As an eminent theologian of this new theological researching field, Rahner has courageously broken a new path to approach the way of God's universal salvation that besides Christians also includes non-Christians of other religions who are all the time excluded and outside the door of redemption.

If we are to reach the supposition that non-Christians can enter into the salvation of God, Rahner suggests that first of all, we must postulate the presumed result of an investigation into the presence of Christ in non-Christian religions. Owing to the history of Christ's creation being in accord with the history of Christ's salvation, we should accept the presence of Christ throughout the whole of human history and in relation to all people, if we are to believe in Christ as the saviour of all people, in which salvation is similarly brought about for non-Christians by God according to his loving and gracious will. Here, of course, he requires the presupposition only that these non-Christians are of good will because of goodness in his supernatural a priori structure, even though this good will has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Then how could non-Christians who are conscientious, moral and religious have a place in relation to the salvation of Christ? Before we attain a reasonable answer to this question, we must first understand Rahner's two theological presuppositions; these are nature and grace, the supernatural existential.

Rahner criticizes the standard neo-scholastic explanation of the relationship between nature and grace, thought of as two layers laid very carefully one on top of the other so that they interpenetrate as little as possible. Inasmuch as the standard view of the subject is that supernatural grace is a reality which we know about from the teaching of the faith, but which is completely outside our experience (i.e. the sphere of our spiritual and moral actions) and nature is what we experience of ourselves without salvation is pure nature only, we cannot know anything about our supernatural state and see anything of the action of grace. Rahner directly indicates that we cannot absolutely separate the relationship of nature and grace, and that we should discover from existential thinking that grace is in fact the most perfect fulfilment of nature;

God the Lord of this natural life and destiny, and open themselves to grace; but nature in itself has only a *potentia obedientialis* (obediential potency) to do this (Karl Rahner, *Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*, p.98).

As for this statement, Rahner elaborates it by holding the two theories of Pius XII's uncreated grace and the Scotist's self-offering. The former is no longer regarded as merely the consequence of the creation of "infused" grace, a "physical accident", but rather as the very essence of grace, strictly a mystery, in which God communicates himself to human beings in their own reality, especially fulfilled in the mystery of the incarnation. The latter is in relation to the connection between the incarnation and the order of grace. So, of course, the order of grace should be dependent on the incarnate Word in the providence of God, but both depend on a free gift of God, which is the divinising loving-kindness being put at human beings' disposal because the original act of God—God's self-emptying. Love gives itself up in the incarnation.

Perhaps Rahner could go further due to his emphasizing that grace also penetrates our conscious life, not only our essence but our existence too. He reconsiders the teaching of St. Thomas on the specific object of entitatively supernaturally elevated act; an object that cannot be experienced and reached by any natural act. Rahner comments that a formal object is the *a priori* "mental horizon", which we are conscious of in being conscious of ourselves, which is the context for all our knowing and recognizing of *a posteriori* individual objects. In the metaphysics of knowledge we can see that,

...transcendence to being at all, the natural openness to being as a whole, is not clearly distinguishable in reflection afterwards from the supernatural transcendence, by grace, of the Spirit, in every one of its supernaturally elevated acts, to the God of eternal life and to the immediate experience of being, although both kinds of transcendence are conscious (*Ibid.* p. 103).

For Rahner, there are impulsions by grace which precede the acceptance of justification in free faith and love because God's invitation by grace to human beings compelled towards the possibility of making an existential decision in their immediate spiritual development, in which they act freely for salvation. If human beings' moral freedom is at their disposal when they have been given, by grace, the possibility of performing supernatural acts, then this supernatural transcendence exists in every human being. Even though they can be sinners and unbelievers, insofar as they have the concrete possibility of doing morally good actions, they are open to transcendence, that is, to the God of supernatural life. Thus, we should have to arrive at the result that every morally good act done by a human being is, in the order of salvation, also a supernatural act of salvation even if human beings do not know of and believe in God's previous grace (for their salvation). This is the inexpressible but existing ground of dynamic power of all existence founded by God. Grace, which is supernaturally elevated from being a merely *a priori* existing ground, enfolds all human beings, sinners and unbelievers too, as the entire sphere of their existence from which they can never escape.

Therefore, Rahner points out, we should not only accept grace as it concerns the individual, but also consider more explicitly its ecclesiological aspects, not only within the church; the possibility of grace and its highest manifestation can be found also in the world of non-Christian religions.

"The supernatural existential" is another important conception and precondition of Rahner's transcendental Christology, and in the philosophically theological term, is borrowed from Heidegger's existentialism. The term "existential" indicates that what God effects in the human soul is intrinsic to the whole structuring of one's humanity. It is intrinsic to human nature that man is drawn to God who creates and calls his creatures to a life in grace,

transforming human existence to the extent that a person may say that he has been raised to a supernatural level.

Against the contemporary philosopher's claim of human extrinsicism, Rahner suggests that God's will elevates human beings to a supernatural order, which happens through an intrinsic ontological influence on human nature. If his will is really in the activity of grace and enables human beings to accept it, then God's real activity in the human soul effects the supernatural realm, so that the human spirit's ontological dynamic inevitably tends towards God's grace and glory. The supernatural existential is not grace itself, but God's graceful aim, through the ontologically changed spirit which lets it freely accept or refuse grace, and which, thereby, decides whether the human being is redeemed or not. Therefore, Rahner states that if the supernatural gift is not rejected, all human beings are within the supernatural order, this means that everybody can come into the salvation of Christ.

Here, involving the relationship between human beings and grace, Rahner conceives that God hopes that Love (himself) is poured out through self-communication, which is his original and ultimate plan, and also belongs to his original and ultimate world, such that to every other existing thing, self-communication must be unlimited love and eternal wonder. Thus, God loves his creature that is his created man, since God created man in a special way and enables him to accept love (God) and to experience the astonishing gracious gift. As for the gracious gifted love, man should not be regarded as a sinful one, because in love he has been blessed and graced. It is through God's love that Rahner sees man as elevated from a natural position to a supernatural position. However, whether or not man accepts this grace, God's nature in his relationship with created man is unchangeable, his plan of salvation is irreversible, and

also he never withdraws his covenant, and this is the spiritual experience that every graced and saved man can undergo.

Rahner's supernatural anthropology defines the inseparable affinity of God and human beings who imply these innermost elements. Firstly, human beings should be able to receive the love, which is God (grace and beatific vision), and they must have congeniality as they have room and scope to understand and desire it. Thus, they must have a real constant potential to possess it. For God created them according to his image and likeness, and they are thought and called into being, so that love might bestow itself. They can really accept and experience this love since the capacity for God of self-bestowing personal love is the central and abiding existential of human being that impels them to do so.

Secondly, the real man as God's partner should be able to receive this love as free gift because this central and abiding existence consisting in the ordination to his own threefold God of grace and eternal life. This is itself to be characterized as un-exalted, as "supernatural." Man not only recognizes himself as part of God's free creation, but because of his existential essence (his nature) having been given the Love which is God, and this would "have to" be offered by God himself. Therefore, man is without excuse as God really is his existent partner.

Thirdly, the man who receives this Love will know this very existence, for this Love is not owed to him, un-exacted real man. The man is always abiding in what is this un-exacted real receptivity, the supernatural existence, and what is left over as remainder when this innermost centre is subtracted from the substance of his concrete entity (his nature), but he as a reality

must have a meaning and a possibility of existence even when the supernatural existential is thought of as lacking.

But Rahner emphatically renders that we cannot absolutely divide nature (existential) and super-nature (grace), as in all cases our existential experience is to be reckoned to the account of the supernatural, so that,

...man can experiment with himself only in the region of God's supernatural loving will, he can never find the nature he wants a 'chemically pure' state, separated from its supernatural existential (TI, I, p.315).

Thereby, from Rahner's concept of supernatural existence, we can derive the result that the spiritual nature possesses an openness for this supernatural existential, and has a *poetentia obedientialis* to be so by the unlimited natural dynamism, that is, an unconditional demand for grace. This insight that God's grace relates to his creatures leads to Rahner's optimistic attitude to the salvation of non-Christians, to whom Rahner gives a new name—anonymous.

After understanding these two theological conceptions, it becomes relatively easy to understand Rahner's belief that in Jesus Christ, adherents of non-Christian religions are also saved. He makes two presuppositions within the limits of dogmatic theology. First of all, we shall presuppose a universal and supernatural salvific will of God who is really operative in the world. This implies the possibility of supernatural relation and faith everywhere and throughout the whole history of the human race. Second, when a non-Christian attains to salvation through faith, hope and love, non-Christian religions should be understood in such a way that they really play a role in the attainment of justification and salvation. Jesus Christ can have a positively concrete relationship to non-Christian religions only in and through his Spirit, within which Christ is present and operates in non-Christian believers, and hence in

non-Christian religions. The possibility of this faith is based completely upon the supernatural grace of the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. But it is difficult to answer the questions of whether the Holy Spirit's supernatural grace of faith and justification as it is at work in the non-baptized can be called the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and of how the cross of Christ can be the cause of God's salvific will for other people if God's salvific will is antecedent to the cross of Christ as its cause and not its effect.

Rahner explains, insofar as the universal efficacy of the Spirit is always orientated towards the high point of its historical mediation, and the event of Christ is the final means of the communication of the Spirit to the world. This Spirit is everywhere, and from the outset, is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos of God who became man. The Spirit, as the efficacious cause of the incarnation and of the cross who bears his goal within himself as an entelechy, and realizes his own essence as communicated to the world only in the incarnation and the cross, is always everywhere bringing justifying faith,

This faith is always and everywhere and from the outset a faith which comes to be in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In this Spirit of his he is present and operative in all faith (*Foundations of Christian Faith*, p.318).

Furthermore, Rahner makes a clear elaboration of the relationship between transcendence and history (the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* in knowledge), and then derives that Jesus Christ is always and everywhere present in justifying faith, because this faith is always and everywhere the searching memory of the absolute saviour who is the God-Man and reaches fulfilment of salvation through death and resurrection. Inasmuch as there is present in the finding and retaining subjectivity of man an *a priori* principle of expectation, of searching, of hoping, as well as an *a priori* principle of "memory", memory, which itself has *a priori* structure, is the anticipation of the absolute saviour who searches and watches in history. As spirit and

freedom, man always experiences, in his transcendence, his orientation towards the incomprehensible mystery (God), and this orientation which is born, liberated and made radical by supernatural grace, is able to find its fulfilment in the immediate self-communication of God:

The memory which belongs to man's gratuitously elevated transcendence searched in hope and in anticipation for that event in history in which a free decision about the salvific outcome of history is made and becomes tangible (*Ibid.* p.320).

Through our survey of Rahner's transcendental Christology, we discover he endeavours to elaborate the core of Christian faith in order to make it more easily intelligible and acceptable in a different way from the approach of orthodox Christology, which has been seriously challenged by today's atheists and some humanized and secularised theologians. Karl-Heinz Weger considers that the real insight of Rahner's transcendental Christology is that:

The task of a transcendental Christology is to show that man expects, with an inner transcendental necessity, God's historical promise to be fulfilled in him (Karl Rahner: *An Introduction to His Theology*, p.155).

Rahner's theology and method are mainly affected by Kant's *a priori*, neo-Thomist transcendence and Heidegger's existentialism and also owes much to T. de Chardin's cosmic evolutionary Christology. But on the concrete subject, his opinion is remarkably different from theirs. His Christology is determined by his transcendental theological anthropology, so he particularly emphasizes the Logos become flesh. Since the Christ possesses perfect humanity, then he who is self-conscious of spirituality and knowledge, should own his human historical process of development as we own ours. This is rather distinct from the traditional view of Thomism; otherwise because of God's self-communication the Word of God is hypostatically united with the historical Jesus, since Christ has become the Mediator between

God and human beings, and enables us to achieve union with God and with humankind in him. Here, Rahner parts company with Hegelianism.

From this, we apparently find that Rahner has never been limited in those philosophical doctrines and overcame their pure theoretical abstract concepts, yet developed and endowed them with new meaning in the theological sense. For example, as the key-word of Rahner's transcendental Christology, the term "transcendental" has already distinguished its meaning from its original use. Of course, Kant first used it:

I call all knowledge that is concerned not with objects, but with our way of knowing objects, insofar as these are possible, a priori, transcendental" (*The Critique of Pure Reason*, p.25).

However, Kant's "transcendental" only has a horizontal meaning; it is necessarily and inevitably present *a priori* in all human beings. Rahner, from Belgian Jesuit, Joseph Marechal's teaching, learned that the term "transcendental" has not only a horizontal direction but a vertical direction which means that there is the possibility of a metaphysical knowledge of God, that is, the idea of transcendence above all categorical, empirical experience. According to Rahner's explanation, man's transcendence always points to man's openness to what he calls "mystery;" God, who creates man and self-communicates with him. From understanding the context of the transcendental Christology, we might more intelligibly recognize why Rahner can speculate about the subject of the salvation of non-Christians.

Although Rahner's transcendental method is not simply identical with Kant's, by it, he resolves the problem of human *being*—(Sein) in Heidegger's existentialism—and works out his theologically transcendental anthropology. Hans Küng critically considers that Rahner's pure theoretical transcendental method, not only contains many problems, but that in it must

inescapably occur the absolute idealistic phantom of German. Despite every historical fact, it speculates everything on a basis of some absolute conceptions of pure being.

However, Rahner denies that it belongs to the abstract conception of pure theory, because transcendently thinking of human being and disposing God's bestowed man is part of the Christian tradition; it is supernatural grace and the recipient and dynamism of revealing God's communion. So Rahner's starting point of transcendental method sets out neither from a concept, nor from human being's substance and essence, but from a living human's real active experience.

The most serious challenge to Rahner's theology has been against his concept of "anonymous Christians," even though it has proved significant in the Catholic Church's dialogue with other denominations and other religions—even Marxists! For instance, Eberhard Jungel claims that Christianity is, in its very essence, not only not anonymous, but also quite hostile to anonymity. Still, he believes that the tag, anonymous Christianity may be offensive to non-Christians, and he utters the question:

Does this teaching not amount to an injury to the non-Christian's self-respect if he finds himself referred to as an anonymous Christian in his absence or even addressed as such, used in this way, the term 'anonymous Christian' can easily go beyond its original intention and become offensive (Karl Rahner: *An Introduction to His Theology*, p.117).

Indeed, a well-known scholar of Japanese Buddhism has even asked of Rahner, "If I am an anonymous Christian, then Father Rahner, you must also be an anonymous Buddhist."

Rahner answers him,

Of course, from your position, you must do so, by this explanation I am very pleased; Even if I must still think is wrong, or granted that correctly exclaiming the god of a real Buddhist is in concord with correctly understanding the God of a Christian. From this statement can actually directly derive the ontological standard (*A Rahner Handbook*, p.58).

The theory of anonymous Christians has an inevitable and fatal weakness, that is, it weakens or reduces the vocation of preaching, converting and mission. Hans Urs von Balthasar similarly rejects Rahner's theologoumenon of anonymous Christianity, because

it implies a relativization of the objective revelation of God in the biblical event and a sanctioning of the objective religious ways of other religions as ordinary and extraordinary ways of salvation (Karl Rahner: *An Introduction to His Theology*, p.119).

The result is that Christians will be reduced to a purely human position; evangelism will be constrained without being given up, and martyrdom for the Lord will become ineffective without being abused. Anonymous Christianity creates the possibility of all human beings becoming universal anonymous Christians. However, in this, the theory apparently contradicts the teaching of the New Testament, in which Jesus Christ had himself carried out and required of his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt.: 28:19).

Critique is merely limited in theory, but Rahner's anonymous Christian thinking appealing in practical ecclesiology has already produced certain good effects. His significant insight is that Rahner penetrates the cosmic Christology to disclose a new concept of the anonymous Christian, because in the order of God's creation, humankind was made under the blessedness of Christ's grace from the very beginning. Human beings share with the natural world in belonging to the supernatural creation. Humankind moves directly towards the Kingdom of God, but, through the work finalized in Christ the history of the world, achieves identity with the history of salvation. This Christology of evolution provides the basis for the theory of

producing the "anonymous Christian," which helps us to understand the special phenomenon of religion in socialist countries particularly since the 1950s.

Because Rahner's theology deals with greater, wider and deeper theological problems, he encounters more criticism attacking particularly his concept of anonymous Christians. (See *Understanding Karl Rahner*, p.121-30) In the past, panic-stricken theologians talked about the development of Christ's self-consciousness and the view of Christ's evolution. Nowadays, no matter how tentatively, Rahner's view (which is more or less and indeed rather reasonable), encouragingly initiates what is new and original, at the same time he also exploits a wide perspective for the development of Christian theology, especially for the development of definitive Christology.

Chapter Two: Thinking of Christology in Chinese Culture: the Relationship between the Way in Chinese Culture and the Word in Christianity

2.1 Tao in Chinese culture and Logos in Christianity

Christian thinking has brought out different theological tides in different cultural backgrounds, such as Black, Liberal, and Feminist theologies. Although Christianity propagated in China was during the very early Tang Dynasty (about 600AD) and was prosperous at that time, it disappeared very soon afterwards, because of its inability to root into the soil of Chinese culture. It was not until time of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) that Christianity was reintroduced. However, since the Monglians did not permit ordinary people to believe in this religion, when the Yuan Dynasty was overthrown Christianity disappeared once again.

Through the effort of several generations of Raman preachers in the early Qing Dynasty, Christianity in China developed, but because of a dispute over ceremonies, which the Raman denied, Chinese Christians melted Chinese culture into Christian theology, so that it led to complete failure. After the opium war, Christianity was brought into China with canon and gun once more, but despite a great deal of personality, material and finance by missionaries, they achieved little because the church was conceived as too western. The awakened Chinese Christians began to set up their own churches in accordance with their cultural context.

How did they construct a Chinese church belonging to the Chinese? Some Chinese Christian theologians turned their eyes from the western frame to Chinese traditional culture. They recognized that if Christianity wanted to root into the Chinese soil, it had to be consonant with

Chinese traditional culture. The traditional culture should not be excluded, but rather, applied in order to understand and enrich Christian theology.

The key word in constructed Christian theology is the Word (Logos) of incarnation. The connotation of Word (Tao) in Chinese culture has many meanings; the concept of Tao possesses a very important position in Chinese philosophical thoughts and religious ceremony. It implies deep significance and wide usage, and has different meanings in different thoughts of school. It is the mythic principle of everything in the universe, the word of sage and a common saying. It is both a walking way and a method of resolving problems. Philosophically, it presents a profound philosophical conception. Socially, it becomes a humanistic moral thought. Religiously, it expresses a religious thought.

How is the concept of Tao produced in Chinese culture? The concept of Tao had been pervasive as far back as the Zhou Dynasty (about 1000BC), but was really put into the system of Chinese philosophy by Laozi and Kongzi (Confucius). Otherwise, the concept of Tao in Confucianism and Taoism is not completely identical each school has their own special meaning. We will now attempt to catch hold of the real meaning of Tao from their works.

2.2 The Relationship between the Way in Chinese Culture and the Word in Christianity

There is an immediate relationship between the Way in Chinese culture and the Word in Christianity. Although the backgrounds of both are different, human beings have the same consistence to pursue the truth, as the proverb says,

They all come to the same successful issue, though by different paths; there is one result, though there might be a hundred anxious schemes.

2.2.1 *The Eternal Word.*

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (John 1:1). That is to say, the Word (Logos) exists by him and prior to everything in the cosmos. St. Paul writes, "He is the firstborn over all creation... He is before all things" (Col.1:15, 17). Moses wrote that the Word is "I am Who I am" (Exod.3:14). The author of the Book of Hebrew tells us, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain... you remain the same, and your years will never end" (Heb.1: 10, 12). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb.13:8). The Apocalypse shows us, "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty'" (Rev.1:8). Therefore, the authors of the New Testament and the Old Testament all recognize that the Word is the eternal Being before all things in heaven and earth.

In his thought Laozi believes that the Way (Word) is unspeakable. The Way that can be spoken of is not an unvarying Way; the names that can be named are not unvarying names. Though he does not know the real reason of production of the Way, he undoubtedly accepts that there was something formless yet complete that existed before heaven and earth. One may think of it as the mother of all things under heaven—its true name we do not know. "Way" is the by-name that we give it. If we were forced to say to what class of things it belongs, we should call it Great (Da). Zhuangzi elucidates the Way more apparently, "Tao is a reality which has its substance, inert and formless... It is its own source and its own root, existing since time immemorial before the heaven and the earth came into existence... It is above the zenith but does not seem high; it is beneath the nadir but does not was there before

time immemorial but does not seem old." Chinese ancient thinkers similarly learned that the Way is also the eternal existence before everything in the cosmos.

2.2.2 The Creative Word

In the first chapter of Genesis, the scripture describes how the Word as the word of God created everything in heaven and on earth, and particularly mentions that God created a human being in his own image. In the chapter eight of the Proverbs, the Word as wisdom says,

The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works. I was appointed from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before he made the earth or its fields or any of dust of the world. I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep its side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.

St. John proclaims concerning the Word of life, which he has seen with his eyes, which he has touched with his hands, "He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:2-3). St. Paul speaks of him, "For from him and through him and to him are all things" (Rom: 11:36). "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1: 16-17). The author of Hebrews also narrates, "in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. All authors

of the scripture believe that in the beginning God created everything through the almighty Word.

The Way (Word) that Laozi understands is the Mother of all things in heaven and on earth; the origin of change of the cosmos. Depending on her they grew up, relying on her they stand, and finally they return to her.

Tao (Way) gave birth to the One; the One gave birth successively to two things, three things, up to ten thousand. These ten thousand creatures cannot turn their backs to the shade without having the sun on their bellies, and it is on this blending of the breaths that their harmony depends (Chapter 42).

Therefore as Tao bore them—the 'power' of Tao reared them, made them grow, fostered them, harboured them, brewed for them (Chapter 51).

Zhuangzi explains Laozi's Dao:

They established their viewpoint of 'original existence' and 'original non-existence' and the core of their view is the 'absolute Tao' (Chapter 33, *Tian Xia*).

At the very beginning, there was nothing in the world at all. There was no existence and there was no name. Then, there was Oneness, another name for Tao, which did not assume any form. From Oneness came everything, each receiving what is called its own 'virtue'. Before things took on their respective forms. There was already the distinction of Yin and Yang, inseparable from each other. This is called the 'destiny'. Things came into existence in the process of flow and flux of Yin and Yang, each with its own configuration that is called its 'form'. The physical form protects its spirit, each with its own characteristics that is called the 'inborn nature'. With further cultivation, the inborn nature returns to virtue; in its perfection, virtue is very much the same as the very beginning (Chapter 12, *Tian Di*).

Tao gives birth to demons and gods; it begets the heaven and the earth (Chapter 6, *Da Zong Shi*).

Tao gives him on appearance, and the heaven gives him a form (Chapter 5, *De Chong Fu*).

Thus, a form without Tao is lifeless and a life without virtue is un-splendid (Chapter 12, *Tian Di*).

Brightness originates from darkness, the visible from the invisible, the spirit from Tao, and the physical form from the energy of the spirit. All things are created with their respective forms and shapes. (Chapter 22, *Zhi Bei You*)

The Way of Laozi and Zhuangzi and the Word in the scripture are alike regarded as the Creator of all things in heaven and on earth, all creatures are still sustained by it, go through the process of change, and finally return to it.

2.2.3 *The Transcendental Word*

The transcendence of the Word is also regarded as the mystery of the Word. It goes beyond the limit of the time and space in the material world, and beyond the thinking of our reason. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). We do not know whether in the beginning the un-incarnated Word had the image of the historical Jesus. The Word was God, then what is God? Nobody has seen God! Only he that comes from God could tell humanity what God is: "God is spirit" (John 4:24). The Spirit is unshaped and invisible, only as the symbol of wind, water, fire, oil and sword. Jesus told the Jews, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58) Of course, this means that he is the Word that was with God in the beginning. The author of Hebrews considers that Jesus Christ is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek. Because this Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High...without father and mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. It shows that the incarnated Christ as the Word, who is, who was and who is to come, is spiritual, mysterious and invisible, and it is only through human reason and experience that the Word is unutterable, unseen and untouchable, although the Word as the Nazarene Jesus had owned a short historic moment.

The Word of Laozi and Zhuangzi possess similar transcendence and mystery:

Because the eye gazes but can catch no glimpse of it, it is called elusive. Because the ear listens but cannot hear it, it is called the rarefied. Because the hand feels for it but cannot find it, it is called the infinitesimal. These three, because they cannot be further scrutinized, blend into one (Chapter 14, *Lao Zi*).

For Tao is hidden and nameless. Yet Tao alone supports all things and brings them to fulfilment (Chapter 41, *ibid.*).

Tao in the Universe is like the south-west corner in the house (Chapter 62, *ibid.*).

Every one under the heaven says that our Way is greatly like folly. But it is just because it is great, that it seems like folly. As for things that do not seem like folly----well, there can be no question about their smallness! (Chapter 67, *ibid.*)

Tao is above the zenith bore the heaven and the earth but does not seem long ago; it was there before time immemorial but does not seem old (Chapter 6, *Da Zong Shi*).

Tao has no its beginning and its end (Chapter 17, *Qiu Shui*).

As Tao cannot be heard, what can be heard is not Tao. As Tao cannot be seen, what can be seen is not Tao. As Tao cannot be spoken of, what can be spoken of is not Tao. Do you know that what creates the form is formless? Tao should not be given a name (Chapter 22, *Zhi Bei You*).

The great Tao should not be publicized (Chapter 2, *Qi Wu Lun*).

The Word of Laozi and Zhuangzi cannot be called or named by human language. Originally, it was shapeless and let things take their course. It can be taught but cannot be accepted; it can be gained but cannot be seen. Therefore, it cannot be called and named by any concrete matter in the world. But one may think of it as the Mother of all things under the heaven, even though it is without sound and without substance, dependent on nothing and unchanging, all pervading and unfailing. So, it is best referred to, simply as "Tao" (Word).

Similarly, Melchizedek in the scripture is originally without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life. In fact, he has no name either; the name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness", "king of peace". This is the true meaning of the un-incarnated Word. Furthermore, in the Old Testament God declares to Israel, "you shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." (Exod. 20:7). God never owns his name: "I am who I am" is not like a human name, meaning the substance of God's existence.

2.2.4 *The Personal Word*

Jesus Christ worshipped by Christians, is embodied as Wisdom or Law in Israel's history, but when the Word become flesh and came into human history to meet with us, he manifested

himself in the image of the concrete personal God. If he had not directly revealed the heavenly Father, it is probable that up to now we would feel that the Mystery was quite confused and obscure. However, the Word, who became flesh, showed us the fullness of God's grace and truth and manifested to us the mystery, to whom people look to in all periods of the world. Jesus told us: "the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23). "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working". (John 5:17) "I stand with the Father, who sent me... If you knew me, you would know my Father also" (John 8:16, 19). "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me" (John 10:30). Recognizing the Word, St. Paul with emotion sighed, "He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (1 Tim. 3:16). The Word owned the image of God, humbled himself, and had to be made like his brothers in every way. In order to deliver sinful and suffering people, he was crucified on the cross to become an atoning sacrifice. Thus, all people should revere and worship the Word.

Tao, through Confucius and Mencius, speaking of Heaven, similarly speak of a person:

If Heaven had wished to let this cause of truth perish, then I, a future mortal, should not have got such a relation to that cause. While Heaven do not let the cause of truth perish, what can the people of Kuang do to me? (Chapter 9, *Zi Han, The Confucian Analects*)

By the ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth they served God, and by the ceremonies of the ancestral temple they sacrificed to their ancestors. He, who understands the ceremonies of the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, and the meaning of the several sacrifices to ancestors, would find the government of a kingdom as easy as to look into his palm! (Chapter 19, *The Doctrine of Mean*)

It is said in the I, 'Help is given to him from Heaven. There will be good fortune; advantage in every respect.' The Master said: 'You (Help) is the is sincere. (Chapter 12:75, *The Great Treatise, Book of Changes*)

He sacrificed to the dead, as if they were present. He sacrificed to the spirits were present." (Chapter 3:12, *Ba Yi, The Confucian Analects*)

He who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray (Chapter 3:13, *ibid.*)

Though a man may be wicked, yet if he adjust his thoughts, fast, and bathes, he may sacrifice to God. (Chapter 8:25, *Li Lou Part II, The Works of Mencius*)

He caused him to preside over the sacrifices, and all the spirits were well pleased with them; thus, Heaven accepted him." (Chapter 9:5, Wan Zhang, Part I, *ibid.*)

Confucian Heaven is Tao (Word); it is Spirit and also God. However, though this Word owns his person, it is not yet as concrete and clear as Christian theology, which identifies the Word as Jesus Christ. And it still keeps the level with which they sacrificed to God when in the Old Testament Israel worshipped the Lord, for it was not yet apparent as the Lord revealed Himself to Israel. But the nature that human beings generally pursue to worship God is the same. Because the human intrinsic construct is endowed with the Spirit of God, every one possesses his spirit from the Spirit, so if a man wanted to keep his own spirit satisfied, then he should make his spirit company with the Spirit of God all the time. That is to say, whenever and wherever he worships God, he does so with his spirit. In the scripture the Word enlightens us, "God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth." And as Confucius spoke:

The individual possessed of the most complete sincerity is like a spirit (Chapter 25, *The Doctrine of Mean*)

Sincerity is the way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men (Chapter 20, *ibid.*).

When we have intelligence resulting from sincerity, this condition is to be ascribed to nature; when we have sincerity resulting from intelligence, this condition is to be ascribed to instruction. But given the sincerity, and there shall be the intelligence; given the intelligence, and there shall be the sincerity (Chapter 21, *ibid.*).

It is evident that through nature (spirit) and sincerity, the Chinaman understands how to worship the personal Heaven (Word).

2.2.5 *The Word of Declaring Torah*

Although the Law was taught by Moses, Israel believed that the Law (Torah) was God's utterance, word, command, precept, law and decree. To like and to rely on his statutes, one may receive love to be satisfied, be blessed to have life, get wisdom to enjoy peace:

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trust-worthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, given joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous (*Psalms* 19:7-9).

The incarnated Jesus came into the world, not to abolish the law of God, but to fulfil it, and to make people able to obey it in truth. So he summed up the law, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt. 22:37-40). The Law of the Old Testament is the love and grace of God. The purpose of the Law is to let people walk with God and perform his complete will in order to have eternal life. Jesus, in the New Testament, earnestly performed what he taught to show to us his words and will, which concretely and precisely embody the Law of God. He perfectly manifested God's holiness, righteousness and love. In the Sermon on the Mount, he fulfilled Moses' law, and again and again called people to follow him. St. Paul emphasized that he required us to imitate Christ.

Confucian human way (law) comes from the Heavenly Way. The question is whether the Heavenly Way is the same as the Law that God promulgated to Moses at Mount Sinai. In fact, both are totally different. Confucius spoke to his disciples,

Does Heaven speak? The four seasons pursue their courses, and all things are continually being produced, but does Heaven say anything?" (Chapter 17, Yang Huo, *The Confucian Analects*).

This shows that Heaven has not directly spoken something to a certain sage. In the thought of Confucianism, when Heaven gives birth to human, they are endowed with the nature that

comes from Heaven. So long as one can exhaust all his mental constitution, giving its full development to his own nature, and be possessed of the most complete sincerity, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. One can get to know God with all his heart and with his all, know God.

When one is able to reach the knowledge of Heaven, he can know other humans.

He presenting himself with his institutions before spiritual beings, without any doubts about them arising, shows that he knows Heaven. His being prepared, without any misgivings, to wait for the rise of a sage a hundred ages after, shows that he knows men. (Chapter 29, *The Doctrine of Mean*)

So Confucius says,

Sincerity is the way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men.

The sage,

...looking up, contemplates the brilliant phenomena of the heavens, and, looking down, examines the definite arrangement of the earth; thus, he knows the causes of darkness and light. He traces things to their beginning, and follows them to their end; thus, he knows what can be said about death and life. (He perceives how the union of) essence and breath form things, and the wandering away of the soul produces the change (of their constitution): thus he knows the characteristics of the anima and animus. (Chapter 4:21, *The Great Treatise, Book of Changes*)

Because the change was made on a principle of accordance with heaven and earth, it shows to us, without rent or confusion, the course of things in Heaven and Earth. Therefore,

Heaven produced the spirit-like things, and the sages took advantage of them. (The operations of) heaven and earth are marked by (so many) changes and transformations; and the sages imitated them (by means of the I). Heaven hangs out its (brilliant) figures from which are seen good fortune and bad, and the sages made their emblematic interpretations accordingly. Then He (°Ó) gave forth the map, the Luo (Â) the writing, of (both of) which the sages took advantage. (Chapter 11:73, *ibid*).

Finally, the sages exhibited in them the way of heaven, calling Yin and Yang; the way of earth, calling the weak and the strong; and the way of men, under the names of Chinese sages, they made legislation found on benevolence (love).

Therefore,

...the administration of government lies in getting proper men. Such men are to be got by means of the ruler's own character. That character is to be cultivated by his treading in the ways of duty. And the treading those ways of duty is to be cultivated by the cherishing of benevolence. Benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity" (Chapter20, *The Doctrine of Mean*).

Confucius lays stress on the importance of sages in the world,

...such being the case, the movements of such a ruler, illustrating his institutions, constitute an example to the empire for ages. His acts are for ages a law to the empire. His word is for ages a lesson to the empire (Chapter29, *ibid.*).

Confucius can get to know the way of Heaven, but through this way, he learns ordinary knowledge so that he may have a thorough understanding the profound way of Heaven:

Whether or not had the Spirit murmured against Heaven, I do not grumble against men. My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. But there is Heaven---that knows me!" (Chapter 14:35, Xian Wen, *The Confucian Analects*)

His words should make us stop and think!

2.3 *Union of Heaven and man and Incarnation*

In the thought of Confucianism, a human being is most honourable in everything. Because Heaven gives birth to the human, the nature of Heaven is endowed in the substance of human life.

Heaven gives people birth, on whom he had not depended (*Warnings, Third Decade of Epics, Book of Poetry*).

Heaven who made mankind, endowed him with body and mind. (Premier Shan Fu, *ibid.*).

Nature, Reason, Mind, Word, Spirit and Heaven as the highest spiritual entities, all belong to the same substance. "What Heaven has conferred is called The Nature; an accordance with this nature is called The Path of duty", which sufficiently expresses this meaning. One can get to know Heaven so long as he achieves to have exhausted all his mental constitution and all his nature.

In order to know men, he may not dispense with knowledge of Heaven (Chapter 20, *The Doctrine of Mean*).

The thought of "the union of Heaven and man" of Confucianism has been formed, developed and strengthened by the following:

2.3.1 *Intercommunion of Heaven and man*

According to Confucius and Mencius, the way of Heaven and the way of man are not separated from each other, but should intercommunicate each other.

Heaven, in its motion, gives the idea of strength. The superior man, in accordance with this, nerves himself to ceaseless activity (Qian, *Book of Changes*).

A person of noble aspirations always encourages himself with this word. Like the active and strong Heaven, constantly producing all things and rearing them, he must do something to bring benefit to people in the society. The admirable, amiable prince displayed conspicuously his excelling virtue, adjusting his people and adjusting his officers. Therefore, he received from Heaven the emoluments of dignity. It protected him, assisted him, decreed him the throne; sending from Heaven these favours, as it were, repeatedly. We may say therefore that

he who is the greatly virtuous one has received Heaven's grace; he should receive the appointment of Heaven to carry out the true way on behalf of Heaven. The virtuous sage, possessed of being endowed the five sagely qualities, who shows himself quick in apprehension, clear in discernment,

...of far-reaching intelligence, and all-embracing knowledge, fitted to exercise rule; magnanimous, generous, benign, and mild, fitted to exercise forbearance; impulsive, energetic, firm, and enduring, fitted to maintain a firm hold; self-adjusted, grave, never swerving from the Mean, and correct, fitted to command reverence; accomplished, distinctive, concentrative, and searching, fitted to exercise discrimination (Chapter 31, *ibid.*).

All embracing and vast, he is like Heaven. Deep and active as a fountain, he is like the abyss. He is seen, and the people reverence him; he speaks, and the people all believe him; he acts, and the people are all pleased with him. Hence, it is said: "He is the equal of Heaven."

The intercommunion of Heaven and man requires that one must be possessed of the most complete sincerity, for sincerity is the rule of Heaven. If he is possessed of sincerity, he can understand the rule of Heaven and apply it to the rule of man. It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under Heaven, and if he can give its full development to his nature, he can do the same to other men. Able to give his full development to the nature of other men, he can give their full development to the natures of creatures and things. Thus, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and earth and work together with Heaven and earth:

They exhibited in them the way of Heaven, calling the lines Yin and Yang; the way of earth, calling them the weak and the strong; and the way of men, under the names of benevolence and righteousness (Chapter 2:4, *Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams, Book of Changes*).

Heaven makes all things grow with Yin and Yang and men administer a country with benevolence and righteousness. Heaven keeps the rules strictly that govern rewards and

punishments according to human actions. "Heaven sees according as my people see; Heaven hears according as my people hear."

When Heaven heard from the people that Jie (the last ruler of the Xia Dynasty) and Zhou (the last ruler of the Shang Dynasty) did all kinds of evil to make the people suffered, then Heaven instructed Tang (the first emperor of the Shang Dynasty) and Wu (the first emperor of the Zhou Dynasty) to overthrow Jie and Zhou. When Wen (the sage emperor of the Zhou Dynasty) exercised government by the means of benevolence, Heaven blessed his empire to with prosperity and gave his people peace, which reached the acme of ancient civilization.

Only Heaven (God) is not unvarying, as He does good conducts, He bestowed all blesses to the people; as He does not good conducts, He punishes the people with all disasters.

This relationship of the intercommunion of Heaven and man makes people able to exhaust all his mental constitution, and knowing his nature, he can know Heaven. Able to keep his mental constitution rearing his nature, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and earth.

2.3.2. Interaction of Heaven and man

"Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend" was the practice of the early Han Dynasty, but it was replaced by "rejecting a hundred schools, only respecting Confucianism." Dong Zhongshu, the great Confucian in the Han Dynasty, succeeds the intercommunion of Heaven and man in the idea of the union of Heaven and man of Confucius and Mencius and, advances the new opinion of the interaction of Heaven and man to develop

the idea of the union of Heaven and man. He inherited the thoughts of the Yin-Yang School (including the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire and earth) and made an analogy with nature in order to demonstrate that Heaven is the ruler, possessing its own will. He suggests the method of thinking of "interaction of the same kind" and deduces the conclusion of the interaction of Heaven temper of delight and anger and the sentiment of grief and joy, which is similar to humankind, so that Heaven and man are one united with the same kind. (*The Meaning of Yin Yang*, Vol.12, Chun Qiu Fan Lu)

Therefore, he demonstrated the interaction of Heaven and man in detail:

Heaven has Yin and Yang, also has man; the Yin of Heaven and earth rise, also man's Yin rises in responses; man's Yang rises, also the Yang of Heaven and earth rise in responses, they belong to the same way (*Inter-impulse of The Same Kind*, Vol.13, *ibid.*).

Yang gives, Yin deprives; Yang is benevolent, Yin is ruthless; Yang is generous, Yin is violent; Yang is love, Yin is evil; Yang gives birth, Yin kills. Heaven, who produces and kills, supports and deprives, expresses those characteristics that interact with humankind:

I attain to the sincerity of other people with my heart, but the sincerity of other people has greed and benevolence, the characteristic of greed and benevolence. The name of human body come from Heaven, Heaven performs Yin and Yang, there is the nature of greed and benevolence in human body; Heaven can prohibit Yin and Yang, the desire in human body can be forbidden; which is identical with the way of Heaven. (*Inspection of Name*, Vol. 10, *ibid.*).

Thus, from the inter-impulse of the same kind to interaction of the same kind and because Heaven and humankind belong to the same kind, we can deduce the interaction of Heaven and man. This illustrates that Heaven and man enjoy the same vitality and both are united to be one. Therefore Heaven and man connect the same vitality of the universe. Man's action is in accordance with Heaven, but Heaven dominates man.

2.3.3 *Same Reason and Same Virtue*

Lu Jiuyuan, the Confucian thinker of the Song Dynasty, raises the banner of "My heart (mind) is the universe". "Heart is reason", emphasized by him, which means the heart is the same thing as reason. We can derive the way of Heaven from the morality of the human heart. He says,

Everything densely exists in the heart, fill it and expand it to spread over the universe, nothing but this reason." (Quotation, Part I, Vol.34, *The Collections of Lu Jiuyuan*).

The heart possesses the ability for the production and creation of everything. He interprets Mencius' thought that "Everything is ready for me" as,

All things are already complete in us. There is no greater than to be conscious of sincerity on self-examination (*With Zeng's Residence*, Vol. 1, *ibid.*).

Then, from "all people have this heart, all hearts are this reason, the heart is the reason" and the reason is the way (word), infers that,

...the heart in Heaven is considered as Yin and Yang; on Earth as the strong and the weak; in people as benevolence and righteousness" (*ibid.*).

Although Yin and Yang, the strong and the weak, benevolence and righteousness are different in expression, essentially they are one. He believes that the sage,

...who is in harmony, in his attributes, with heaven and earth; in his brightness, with the sun and the moon; in his orderly procedure, with the four seasons; and in his relation to what is fortunate and what is calamitous, in harmony with the spirit-like operations of Providence. He may precede Heaven, and Heaven will not act in opposition to him; he may follow Heaven, but will act only as Heaven at the time would do. If Heaven will not act in opposition to him, how much less will man! How much less will the spirit-like operation of Providence!" (Qian, *Book of Changes*).

The great attribute of Heaven is what is meant by the abundance of its virtue. It is manifested in the benevolence of its operations, and then again it conceals and stores up its resources. The great virtue of man is benevolent. The sage discovers the production and reproduction of Heaven and Earth from benevolence. The sage realizes the conscience of the way from the conscience of the heart and carries out the virtue of benevolence and righteousness to bring out blessings to all people, which reaches the ideal state of the union of Heaven and man.

2.3.4 *Union of Heaven and man*

Chen Jing and Chen Ying, the two brothers of Confucianism in the Song Dynasty, put forward that "Everything is only one the reason of Heaven". All things belong to the one reason, which independently exists for itself in the universe. It did not exist for Yao (the great sage) nor disappear for Jie (the worst ruler).

What the heart intercommunicates is only the reason...which reaches the realm as dreams are all shapeless, only exists the reason" (Part II, Vol. 2, *Chen's Posthumous Papers of He Nan*).

Chen's reason is precisely the Way, that is to say, it is the rule and principle of ethics.

Watching, hearing, speaking and acting, if not fitting for the reason people cannot do these, for they belong to the ceremony, and the ceremony is the reason (Vol. 15, *ibid.*).

So human watching, hearing, speaking and acting should be in accordance with the social ceremony and regulations between father and son, between sovereign and minister, which are the definite reason, and have no way to escape from between Heaven and Earth (Vol. 5, *ibid.*).

In human nature, reason displays that,

...the nature is the reason, from the sages Yao and Shun to common people the reason is the same one (Vol.18, *ibid.*).

Everyone possesses the same reason. So long as a common person owns the conscience of benevolence, he may become a sage:

The benevolent is united with everything under Heaven and earth to merge into an organic whole."
"The heart of one person is the heart of Heaven and Earth; the reason of one thing is the reason of all things" (Part I, Vol. 2, *ibid.*).

Heaven and man merged into an organic whole is the union of Heaven and man. Zhu Xi, another famous Confucian in the Song Dynasty, succeeds the philosophy of the two Chen brothers, and in the logic structure of reason and vitality (spirit), further deduced that,

...from down to up, the five elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth) are only the two vitalities (Yin and Yang), the two vitalities are only the unique reason; from up to down, there is only the one reason that all things share with their bodies. In everything they have each own reason. However, all of them belong to the only one reason.

Finally, he brought about the conclusion,

I and everything under Heaven and Earth merge into an organic whole (*The Doctrine of The Means, Comments of The Four Books*).

Afterwards, Wang Yangming, the great Confucian in the Ming Dynasty, who turned to the philosophy of mind from the philosophy of reason, believed that the substance of mind is originally unmoved; it is precisely the nature, and the nature is the reason:

The human mind is the source of Heaven, the substance of mind may be anything, which originally belongs to the same Heaven, because of selfish obstruction, the substance of Heaven is lost. The reason of mind is unlimited, which originally belongs to the one source, because of selfish block, the substance of source is lost (Chun XI Lu, Part II, Vol. 3, *The Pantects of Wang Wencheng*).

Then he renders that the mind is the Way, the Way is Heaven. Able to know the mind, people can know the way; able to know the way, people can know Heaven. Heaven, Earth and man originally merge into an integral whole, but because of human selfish obstruction, they cannot

become an integral part. In order to realize the complete union of Heaven, Earth and man, man must take his selfish desire away. On this problem, Wang Yangming advances the philosophy of conscience,

...the conscience is the nature of the mandate of Heaven. The substance of my mind is naturally the spiritual revealer. All ideas are exposed, so that nothing is not known by the conscience of my mind (*Questions of The Great Learning*, Vol.26, *ibid.*).

The conscience dwells in every people, which is the spiritual root planted by Heaven and which owns vital energy and continuously itself produces and reproduces in an endless succession. And it has the capacity of creating and bringing up all things:

The conscience is the spirit of creation, and these spirits give Heaven and earth birth, and form God and spirits and gods (*Answer to Zhou Daotong*, Chun Xi LU, Part II, *ibid.*).

As the conscience of the spirit of the universe, it possesses the characteristic of the potential existing in the back of the phenomenal world. The conscience is precisely the mind, the Way and Heaven. Able to reach the conscience, one can know Heaven. "The mind is the ruler of all things under Heaven and Earth; the mind is Heaven, speaking of the mind touches upon all things in the universe" (*Answer to Ji Mingde*, Vol.6, *Ibid.*) From the beginning of this interaction, we can see that Heaven and man merge into an integral whole. Because the mind is the spirit, and the spirit is full of the whole Heaven and Earth, human spirits Heaven and Earth, everything, spirits and gods, all belong to the same substance. Thus, Heaven and man merge into an integral whole, and this is regarded as the union of Heaven and man.

2.3.5 *Relationship of Incarnation and the Union of Heaven and man*

In the theology of Christianity, the Word is the transcendental personal God, come into the world, taking the very nature of a servant. This divine action does not belong to any human action, but God himself directly brings about the event. How do we understand and accept that God reveals himself to human beings in the incarnation? The union of Heaven and man in the thought of Chinese culture contributes some enlightenment to humankind.

First of all, let us investigate the transcendental construct of human beings that provides the condition for this divine action; "Word become flesh." According to the scripture, "God created man in his own image," "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being;" every one is endowed with God's image, and possesses the spirit from God. Although the ancestor of human beings sinned and was estranged from God, one given the image of God in man's inner life does not disappear thoroughly. All men who look for God in sincerity still have the possibility of achieving the truth. Enoch walked with God, Noah was righteous and blameless before God, and Abraham, similarly, was reckoned righteous.

These events manifest that the intrinsic transcendental construct of human beings can let God freely act in it, and not be influenced by any extrinsic evil desire. Because in the intrinsic transcendental construction of human beings, the spirit endowed by God transcends construction of human beings, the spirit endowed by God transcends the limitation of the physical world and completely excludes these temperaments: desires and disturbances come from the physical body and the outside world, a human spirit and the Spirit of Creator can be intercommunicated each other, thereupon then, one can understand the mysterious will of the Divinity, that is, the truth.

In the thought of Confucianism, man is produced and reared by Heaven and its nature is in him. When the nature is darkened by the selfish desire, man loses his conscience, and has thereby no way to grasp the truth transcending the world. So that man must rid himself of selfish desire in order to reach conscience and make nature dwelling in man manifest. This is why Confucius says, "What Heaven has conferred is called The Nature; an accordance with this nature is called The Path (Way) of duty; the regulation of this path is called Instruction."

In order to attain to the Way, the individual must possess of the most complete sincerity. Because "Sincerity is the way of Heaven, the attainment of sincerity is the way of men." The man, who has attained to the way, can give its full development to his nature, he can then assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, and with Heaven and Earth, form a ternion. What Confucius requires is that man possess the most complete sincerity, for then he can give its full development to his nature and come to know Heaven. Mencius stresses, "He who has exhausted all his mental constitution (mind) knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven."

The mind is the nature endowed by Heaven when human beings were born. In order to keep the good and pure mind, man must nourish the heart and make the desires few; thereby man can reach to preserve his heart, to nourish his nature and to serve Heaven. Whoever possesses the most complete sincerity and exhausts all his mental constitution, becomes a transcending human body and has a direct immediate relation with Heaven. Even though as the mystery of the world, Heaven cannot be defined, Heaven shows his propitious sign or ill omen, to him who has possessed sincerity or who has exhausted all his mental constitution. Able to perceive Heaven's correspondence to humankind, he reaches the realm of the union of Heaven and man.

Besides the intrinsic transcendental construct of man himself providing the conditions for the possibility of Word become flesh, there is another important factor. The work of the Spirit makes the condition of the possibility of Word become flesh.

When God directly interferes in the things of the world, or reveals himself to human beings, it is frequently through the work of the Spirit. The ability of the Spirit surpasses rational thinking and imagination of man. Through its action, the Almighty realizes a certain purpose in the world. God makes his chosen people obey his will through the power of the Spirit.

Before the God-man Moses left the world, he put his hands on the head of Joshua, his successor, to make him accept the power of the Spirit and continue to lead Israel over the River of Jordan, and to come into the land of Canaan. When the prophet Elijah was taken up to Heaven in a whirlwind, the prophet Elisha asked for him double portion of his spirit (II Kings 2:9). When Ezekiel saw visions of God, the Spirit of God was upon him; when the prophet heard a loud rumbling sound, he prophesied, "Then the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet" (Ezekiel 3:24). When Zerubbabel led the return of Israel to Jerusalem, to rebuild the temple and the construction was damaged and work forced to stop, the prophet Zechariah was inspired to cry out, "not by might, not by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord...The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of the temple; his hands will also complete it" (Zechariah 4:6, 9).

Through the servants chosen by God, the work of the Spirit was sufficiently presented. God wants to complete his own work, and always chooses the people to fulfil it. But since it is almost impossible for the person belonging to the flesh to take such important responsibility,

God gives the Spirit (power) to the chosen. Thus, the completeness of the divine work is not by human ability, but by the Spirit who dwells in the chosen person. The Word was with God in the beginning, but for the sake of delivering his created human beings, he humbled himself to come into the world, and he had to be made like his brothers in every way, which made people able to recognize God and return to God through the vivid Nazarene Jesus. In the course of the "Word become flesh," the work of the Spirit provided the condition for the Incarnation. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1: 35). At the same time the angel also said to Joseph, "because of what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1: 20-21). From the speaking of the angel, we can see that the Word of God and man integrated to become one in the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit cleansed the chosen flesh with his mighty power, then filled her and dwelt in her; all these actions prepared the way for the Word become flesh.

In the thought of Confucianism, even though they do not particularly recognise a "Holy Spirit", what Confucians emphasizes is the effect of the mind (heart) in men, and is quite relevant to the function of the Spirit. Mencius firstly advances the idea of exhausting one's mind, knowing his nature and knowing Heaven. Thus, the mind is raised over one's body to a certain thing; the spirit, the way and Heaven. If one wants to recognize Heaven (God) or the Way (truth), he must keep the mind endowed by Heaven because the mind and the spirit, the Way and Heaven all contribute to the same integrity:

The heart is the object of having a shaped organ in the five internal organs, which dominates the four limbs and circulates the blood of body, comes and goes between the right and wrong, goes in and comes out among all things (Huai Nanzi, *The Teaching of The Original Way*).

If one wants to make his subjective consciousness (mind) reach the realm of intercommunication with God, he must be nourished in the five aspects: virtue, peace, emptiness, fairness and pureness. The mind has neither sorrow nor joy, which is the perfect virtue; the mind is flexible and unchangeable, which is the perfect peace; the mind has neither habit nor desire, which is the perfect emptiness; the mind has neither good nor evil, which is the perfect fairness; the mind is not disturbed by external factors, which is the perfect pureness. Thus, the subjective consciousness (mind) obtains to the most complete satisfaction; one can control the external things from his inner heart, then he can freely achieve a success in everything. At same time the subjective consciousness (mind) can accept all knowledge of the objective things from outside and realize communicating with the way. Dong Zhongshu, gives new understanding to idea of the union of Heaven and the mind in which the external Heaven can impress human subjective consciousness, he states:

"The function of the mind possesses the effect that all evils are confined in the inside and are not allowed to expand to the outside, so the name of the mind comes from the confinement. If man's qualities endowed from Heaven do not imply any evil, there is nothing in his mind need to be confined." (*Inspection of Name*, Vol. 10, Chun Qiu Fan Lu)

In fact, man has the mind of benevolence and greed in the same way that Heaven has the attribution of Yin and Yang. As Heaven needs to confine his Yin, so man must also confine his selfish desire; for Heaven and the mind originally belong to the same integrity.

Chen Ying claims:

Everything prepares for me (my mind). The mind meets with things, what the mind pays attention to it is apparent, one thing to which is attached important, it appears in the mind. (Persons, *Chen's Essential Words of He Nan*)

He considers that everything, Heaven and Earth, all exist in one's mind; they have the same reason. Able to reach the reason in his mind, he can exhaust his mind, and he can know the nature of other men, creatures and things. He can even know Heaven and Earth, and assist the nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Therefore, the mind is the Reason and the mind is the Way; both derive from the one source. Wang Yangming promotes the idea that "all things densely exist in heart, fill it and expand it to spread over the universe" and "what the mind has done as the mind can produce things." He puts forward the concept that the mind as the subjective consciousness is the only being which possesses the unlimited creativity and activity. The mind is the ruler of everything between Heaven and Earth, and is precisely Heaven. The connotation and function of the mind expand to the same substance of Heaven and Earth, spirits and gods.

Wang Yangming further advances that the mind is the spirit; the spirit fills up the space between Heaven and Earth, and intercommunicates with all things, spirits and gods, and grasps the way of Heaven. However, as the conscience of the mind's entity, it is difficult to avoid often being obstructed by the selfish desire, and the innate mind is lost:

The mind is the same one, the mind not mixed with something of human selfish desire is the Heaven's mind the mind mixed with something of human selfish desire is the human mind.

Thus, the purpose of the way of sages is to rid the human mind of selfish desire, and thereby restore the Heaven's mind innately existing in it. Only the sage can reach the conscience with the mind of the Way, and come into the realm of the spiritual manifestation of the Heaven's reason.

Chapter Three: Christology in the Chinese Church

After the Opium War, many western missionaries came to China preaching the gospel and set up churches all over the mainland. At that time, two schools; liberalism and fundamentalism dominated theological thought. Because the sovereign rights of church belonged to foreign missionaries, Chinese Christians obeyed absolutely western theory as explained according to different denominations' opinions. But after the May Fourth Movement in 1919, Chinese intellectuals began to awaken. They advocated science, democracy and freedom in order to build a new China. At the same time Chinese ministers and Christian scholars urged forward the movement of Chinese Church self-government and indigenisation. But soon, Chinese intellectuals initiated the Movement of Anti-Christianity because Christianity was regarded as a foreign religion, which meant that Christianity was both the aggressive tool of Western countries and a destructive implement, damaging Chinese traditional culture. This, however, did not harm Christianity in China. On the contrary, it stimulated and accelerated the Chinese Church's self-government and indigenisation.

How did the indigenous church develop during that particular period? This was the unprecedented new question for the young church once independent of the mother (western missionary) church. Theologians, on the one hand, had to keep the pure Christian faith, but at the same time, clearly explain the faith within Chinese culture in a way that Chinese people would easily and intelligibly understand and accept. From that time, there have been some well-known theologians: (1) John Sung, Watchman Nee and Wang Mingdao emphasizing Charismaticism; (2) Jia Yuming insisting on Fundamentalism; (3) Zhao Zichen initiating the integration of Christian faith with Chinese culture; (4) Wu Yaozong advocating the Social Gospel; (5) K. H. Ting maintaining the Cosmic Christ. We now examine the thoughts of

these theologians and recognize how they constructed Chinese theology, and from this base we can try to imagine the future of Christology in the Chinese Church.

3.1 *Charismaticism*

Emphasizing spiritual experience is the intrinsic dynamic of church revival all through the ages, as in the great revival of St Ignatius of Loyola's Society of Jesus and John Wesley's Methodist movements. In China, three well-known evangelists; John Sung (Song Shangjie), Watchman Nee (Ni Zhesheng) and Wang Mingdao unequivocally and unremittingly attacked the sin of the church and society. They emphatically stated the role of the Holy Spirit in filling the church with repentance and regeneration, and combined elements of Western Christianity with Chinese traditional religion: they thereby formulated and shaped the Chinese church, e.g. the Local Assemblies also called the Little Flock. But Dr. Sung never set up his own denomination and was an independent and ecumenical evangelist; he intensely opposed any denomination whose fundamental reason was to divide the church.

Chinese Church revival movements had mixed reactions to the upsurge of revivalist evangelism and the charismatic "spiritual gifts movement". They revolted against the denominational churches for many reasons such as:

- Authority
- A theological instead of a spontaneous religion
- Over-organization
- Over-intellectualism
- A dry church program with no provision for social fellowship (according to C. Stanley Smith, "Modern Religious Movements", *China Christian Year Book* 1935, p.109)

They have no interest in social welfare and no concern for education, instead they obsessively focus on the topic of sinners and salvation and particularly stress the love of God, the blood of Christ, the gifts of the Spirit, and love for one another; repeatedly asserting the apocalyptic elements in the Gospel like Fundamentalists. Otherwise, personal spiritual experience and private revelation are glorified and there is "fantastic allegorizing of Scripture". They intensively followed the style of the early Apostles' church. Every meeting usually lasts a long time and sometimes continues for several days and nights. They create a special emotional atmosphere, through preaching, singing hymns, crying in repentance, laughing through forgiveness, fasting prayer, filling with the Spirit, healing the sick, speaking foreign tongues etc. From these fanatic charismatic phenomena, we can see a mixture of Christianity and indigenous Chinese religious traditions. They emphasize pneumatological Christology; every event takes place in Jesus, and is spiritualised.

Charismaticism as the internal dynamic of the indigenised Chinese Church revival movement has influenced the contemporary church, and development continues unceasingly. This particular religious enthusiasm and emotionalism can still be discovered in a Chinese Church service, but is especially seen in the worship style of the family church.

However, vivid the living spiritual experience, it involved certain shadows of Chinese religious traditions and has some implications of superstitious colour. Before liberation, the conservatives considered it as obscurantist, and even today, the official church still criticizes it. Notwithstanding, there are some minor drawbacks in the insight of the evangelical revival movement. It has brought about the surprise consequence that hundreds and thousands of people are day by day led to the church of God, participating in the branches of Christ's body by the moving of the Holy Spirit.

3.2 *Fundamentalism*

Up until the present, Jia Yuming, who is regarded as the real indigenised theologian, has had a strong influence on the Chinese church. If we trace back to the background of Jia's theology, it is not difficult to discover that his thought comes totally from the source of Holy Scripture, in which all paragraphs and words imply or parablise the salvation of Jesus Christ. Since he emphasizes pious prayer and spiritual life, he himself practises serving the Lord with "his double knees". His well-known book, *The Way of Complete Salvation*, elaborates his central view that God saves all human beings through his only begotten Son, the incarnate Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to prepare grace for humankind. Whoever believes and accepts the name of Christ can enter into the Kingdom of God, but salvation completely depends on the precious blood of the God-Man, by no means on any human effort. His series *Exegesis of Scripture*, explaining the spiritual meaning of scripture, are most important handbooks for Chinese Christians. Under the impact of a liberal influence, Chinese theology has undergone some change, but under Jia's biblical conception (incorporating the ideas of Watchman Nee and Wan Mingdao), fundamentalism dominates Chinese Christian faith, especially in the primary churches.

The doctrinal basis of Fundamentalism is constructed on these essential concepts: the Trinity; the divine inspiration and infallibility of the Holy Scripture, and its supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct; universal sin and guilt; incarnation through the virgin birth; redemption from sin and guilt only through the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

The Bible is part of Christianity itself; indeed it is the particular centre of the religion, the essential nuclear point from which lines of light radiate into every particular aspect. In the eyes of fundamentalists, the Bible functions as a sort of correlation of Christ. Christ is the personal Lord and Saviour, who illuminates everything and enters into all relationships. The Bible is a verbalized, inscripturated entity, the given form of words in which God has made himself known, and thus the Bible equally enters into all relations, its words cannot be quoted too often, its terms, cadences and lineaments are all to be held dear. The Bible is the supreme religious symbol that is tangible, articulate, possessive, and accessible to men on earth. Christ and the Bible can thus be said to have complementary roles.

Fundamentalism repeatedly emphasizes the subject of human sin as well as evangelism. Sin is a fearful horror, ever-present and all embracing, which only the blood of Christ can dissipate. The morality of the unsaved person is likely to be both hypocritical and prideful. At most, occasional rays of light communicated by conscience and the like lighten it, but these partial forms of light only make darker and more blameworthy the darkness that generally prevails. Sin is universal and almost metaphysical: it belongs to the "nature" of fallen man. Salvation is primarily the removal of that barrier which sin has set between God and man; it is the renewal of that relation of fellowship, righteousness and obedience which had been destroyed by sin, but on the cross, Christ effected a once-for-all atonement, in which the power of sin was broken and the divine judgment due upon man for his sin was endured by God himself in his love.

The incarnation is the concentration of the Fundamentalist theology with traditional orthodoxy, they assert that Christ was both God and Man; but the actual emphasis is heavily on his being God. It is because he is the Son of God that his suffering makes atonement: the

love of God is expressed in the fact that he gave up his own Son for our sakes. The story of the virgin birth shows that Jesus was more than merely human. He is the Messiah or Christ of Israel, as prophesied beforehand in the Old Testament. He is never merely a teacher or leader or the perfect man; if he is seen as any of these, it is as part of the greater conception that he is the Son of God incarnate, and the emphasis is on his divinity more than his humanity.

As to redemption, fundamentalism urgently insist on the theory of satisfaction where the death of Christ was a sacrifice for the removal of sin, based on the pattern of the sacrificial atonement rituals of the Old Testament. It bitterly opposes any trends that would concentrate on the teaching of Jesus, as an ethical guidance to be followed, lessening the significance of his death upon the cross. It is totally wrong to suppose that by following his teaching or his example, we might be able to do something to overcome sin.

The salvation of a person relying on God's grace through his faith is another emphatic theme in fundamentalist theology. Faith is the acceptance of God's grace. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour, then God's atoning love in Christ becomes effective for him and in him. He is justified, forgiven, and is adopted as a child of God. He is born again and becomes a new creature; he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit within him as his sanctifier. Faith, by grasping the benefits of Christ's atoning work, sets the believer in a new relationship with God. This new relationship does not continue automatically, but has to be maintained in the Christian life through a growth in grace, a continual resistance to the renewed attacks of sin and temptation, a continual dying to self, and rising again to obedience to the will of God.

The pious Christian life is prayer. Fundamentalists recognize that prayer at its best should be a personal expression of praise, of thanks, of needs and of seeking the furtherance of the will of God. It should include a strong element of self-examination, self-searching and confession, and seek the power of God for victory over sin. It is through prayer that people are brought to Christ, and through it difficult personal decisions are rightly concluded. Through it money is made available for the needs of the church, and through it the sick are healed, dangers and temptations averted. The importunity and frequency of prayer are much emphasized: one must ask again and again, without wearying.

In fundamentalism this missionary impulse is actually personal. The task of mission, of spreading the good news of the Gospel, belongs to every individual Christian and not only to official or ordained ministry. So at present in China, even though there is no newspaper, magazine, radio or television station to publicly propagate the message of the Bible, the Chinese church increases day by day. The important reason for this is that most Chinese Christians zealously spread the Gospel to their fellow-countrymen.

There is little difference between Chinese Fundamentalism and western Fundamentalism as described by George M. Marsden in *Fundamentalism and American Culture* and James Barr in *Fundamentalism*. Perhaps fundamentalist history can trace back to Arminianism, Zinzendoff's Pietism, Wesley's Revivalism and Schleiermacher's Modernism and his successor Ritschl's Liberalism. In order to defend the authority of the Bible and orthodox dogma, fundamentalists actively oppose all various types of liberalism that reject rigid dogmatic theory, and reduce the authority of the Scripture. The prominent representatives such as Millennialism and Pentecostalism constantly attack Modernism, Liberalism and Evolutionism and other religions.

From the thirties and forties, Chinese evangelists, influenced by western fundamentalism were reluctant to accept the Social Gospel, and emphatically claimed the importance of individual salvation. Thus, the controversy between Fundamentalists and those who proclaim a Social Gospels never stop. This is why the persecution of fundamentalists is more serious than other Christians during the Cultural Revolution. Although fundamentalists have undergone a lot of suffering, they never lost their faith, but kept, it because their roots have been in the life of Jesus Christ. This is also another very important reason why the Chinese Church is rapidly restored after economic reformation and grows prosperously day after day.

Of course, Chinese fundamentalism might be more conservative than its western counterpart. This may have something to do with Chinese traditional religions, for example, fundamentalists firmly stress that Christians cannot watch television, go to the cinema, read other books other than the Bible, or associate with non-Christians because they are afraid of their pure faith becoming contaminated. They believe that every word in the Bible has a spiritual meaning, so they explain the Bible with the Bible, and deny any contribution of lower or higher criticism. Even if I appreciate fundamentalists' rich religious life, it is rather difficult for me to accept their mechanical attitude to the actual life in the world. We should admit the entire creation of God, not merely a part of the whole creation. The crux of the matter is that we must overcome the evil by the power of our Lord to protect the originally beautiful and good world. A Christianity of wider tolerance, love and freedom, is easily accepted by many people, especially by those within Chinese traditional culture.

3.3 *Interpreting Christian Faith with Chinese Culture*

Chao Zichen is a humanist, philosopher of personality and Confucian theologian. After the May Fourth Movement, Chao firmly believed that only Christianity could save “broken old China.” China had to be Christianised. At the same time, he maintained Christianity should be indigenised, that is to say, Christian faith must be interpreted by traditional Chinese culture. On this point, precisely speaking, what Chao emphasized was the ethics and morals of Confucius and Mencius, rather than the metaphysical philosophy and mythical natural religion of Daoism and Buddhism. Because of the deep influence of western democracy and science and of burgeoning rationalism of liberal theology, Chao conceived and constructed Chinese indigenous Christian theology by a process of rationalizing religious experience, with the result that any Christian doctrine which did not conform with Chinese thought was simply drained away through his rational filter.

Chao's theological focus concentrates on the historical Jesus of Nazareth, for Jesus' personality and spirit included his inner virtues, as well as Confucian ones, such as universal love, piety, sacrifice, purity and so on. So it is through the principles of rationalization and simplification that he stresses Jesus Christ's humanity over his divinity, and the historical Jesus as the son of man over the Son of God. Jesus as the mould of human beings was truly and completely human. That is not to say that Jesus did not equally possess divinity, but that his perfect humanity extensively expressed his perfect divinity. So Jesus became the archetypal human that all human beings should follow and imitate. In Chinese terminology, Jesus was a great sage. As to this Chao perceives that if a human being can partake of divinity through moral and spiritual cultivation, then God is no longer the Wholly Other, but is rather the Wholly Inner, because of the moral impetus to regeneration of personality. This conception implies the positivistic concept in traditional Chinese culture that human nature is originally good, so that anyone can become a sage king.

Chao considers that Jesus could be seen as the perfect example of humankind, because he possessed both the spirit of revolution that was aimed at the hypocritical ritualism of the priests, and the spirit of history that was shown in the moral life of the prophets. In his treatment of both Christian faith and traditional Chinese culture, Chao builds his theory on the foundation of Jesus' two spirits.

Owing to the fierce attack on traditional culture during the New Culture Movement in the 1920s, Chao insisted that morality was the standard by which everything was measured, judged and defined. Moral cultivation can enable human beings to achieve the perfection of personality that lies in self-consciousness, self-revelation, self-control, autonomy, freedom, self-creation and determination of the direction of their own life. Spiritual cultivation in traditional Chinese culture offered this prospect; from individual moral cultivation to regulation of the family and to governing the nation even to peace among all under heaven. But Chao suggested that spiritual cultivation could be realized only through Christian cultivation, in other words, only through imitating Jesus' religious and moral cultivation. Because "the creation of strength of character, deportment, style and moral character cannot be accomplished without so-called spiritual cultivation and spiritual cultivation cannot be accomplished without facing God, emulating Jesus, nor without concentrating mind, body and soul in supplication to heaven, one cannot do without prayer". (*Another View of the Problems of the Christian Student Movement*)

After the 1940s Chao began to change his liberal theology to a theology of revelation, for he found that the Kingdom of heaven was no longer a new society created by humankind. Following his time in prison, Chao awoke from his humanistic fairy tale. He deeply

understood that faith was "not against reason, not opposed to logic", but it "transcended reason without opposing it. And reason can only order the substructure, it cannot exhaust the metaphysical". Thus, Chao thoroughly accepted that "Christianity is a revealed religion; we must first believe and then we may know. We do not first know and then believe". He reconsidered Jesus' personality as two-fold: on the one hand, he was the transcendent God and on the other, he bore the weight of human suffering and sin on his shoulders, which led to his crucifixion. The incarnate Jesus Christ linked the transcendent, inner world of eternity with the moving and changing physical world. The Incarnation was the cornerstone of all morality of humankind even if the truth would always express a mystery that is uneasily comprehended by human reason; we should completely accept it as the revelation of God himself.

Chao's theological thought was transformed from his early humanism to theocentrism, in which we can discover that the weakness of humanity and the limitation of Confucian ethics and morals cause difficulty for individuals and society to achieve the perfect state through human ego intrinsic cultivation, and that only the incarnate Jesus Christ can fit human beings to transcend and to enter into the Kingdom of God. Although Chao stresses the incarnate revelation, at the same time he still believes the natural world and different cultures of humankind can express the knowledge of God. Therefore Christian faith can be explained by the indigenous culture. It is with this new insight that Chao became the pathfinder in the movement of Chinese Church indigenisation.

But today's Chinese theology is still at the start of the road that Chao pioneered. How does the Chinese Church indigenise after all? The problem should be considered urgently at present when the Chinese Church is increasing and rapidly developing.

3.4 *Social Gospel*

Wu Yaozong was the leader and advocate of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement after Liberation. The purpose of the Movement was that the Chinese Church must separate from western missionaries and unite all denominations to become one independent Chinese Church, and call all Christians to support the leadership of the Communist Party and actively participate in the construction of socialism. How could Wu initiate this large-scale movement in the particular circumstance that Communist controlled the new socialist China? This immediately related to Wu's theological thought of Social Gospel. It is because this central view claims that Christians should serve human society as Jesus Christ served human beings, even gave his life for them, which is identical with the slogan that Mao Zedong used to call Communists to wholeheartedly serve people.

Before Wu formed his position of the Social Gospel, he was thoroughly a person who absolutely loved people as Jesus Christ loved all human beings. But because of Japanese aggression, Wu changed his thought of absolute-love and constructed his Social Gospel. The Social Gospel, originating in a background of western liberal theology, criticizes conservative theology that is only concerned for individual salvation, and instead advocates social service; that is to say, Christians should build the Kingdom of God on earth rather than hope to gain it after death. Importantly, Walter Rauschenbush, an advocate of the Social Gospel, in the U.S.A, influenced Wu.

We consider that the church does not exist in a vacuum. Christians cannot separate themselves from the environment of society in which we must live daily. So we should embody our religious experience through social life, but not as in the past with a partial

emphasis on individual exercise of spirituality that completely alienates and isolates Christianity from the world. Thereby Wu seriously criticized conservative fundamentalists, whom he regarded as merely concerned for the individual spirit's salvation and eternal life guaranteed in the last days. Their religion was based purely on feeling religion. It is therefore, a religion that is incomprehensible and unpractical; they had nothing to do with the situation of society, the problem of the country and tendencies in the world only with their religious life.

The core of Wu's Social Gospel is based on Jesus Christ's Gospel. He was heavily influenced by the Sermon on the Mount and he elaborated according to Jesus' Gospel, "Jesus demands us to love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind, and to love our neighbours as ourselves is indeed to serve and sacrifice for people. He also tells us: we must lose our life and gain our life. To lose life is indeed to pursue the truth, it is not self-seeking; to gain life is indeed to achieve a perfect life and an ideal society because of obedience to the truth" (*Transformation of Christianity, Darkness and Brightness*, p. 231).

Here we can find that Wu's immanent Christology is totally different from transcendent Christology in evangelicalism. He emphasizes that the revelation of God is also displayed in the world, nature and history, even in the movements of people, besides in the revelation of the historical Jesus. Thus, he encourages Christians to join in the race of the social reform in the world that is concerned for people's happiness, social righteousness, national prosperity and world peace. In his time he called Chinese Christians to support the anti-aggression, patriotic and constructive movement. If they did, then Jesus' Gospel would be realized through Christians' actual life.

Wu's Social Gospel is practical theology, and not theoretical theology, as he had no interest in western metaphysical theoretical theology. So some people praise Wu as the pioneer of the Liberation Theology of the third world. But some people criticizes his theology of secularisation as being too separate from the pious spiritual life, especially, because of his disbelief in the Virgin birth, Resurrection, Ascension and Second coming. Although Wu's Social Gospel is constructed by his personal religious experience and social practice, it is seemingly short of systematic theological investigation and integration of hermeneutic. However, we cannot neglect the fact that theology stimulates Chinese Christians to realize their religious value on earth that is precisely necessary for the reforming China at present.

Christology is completely founded on the fact that the Word of God became flesh and the incarnate God was crucified for human sins to accomplish salvation, and was resurrected from the dead to bring about the eschatological future for all human beings. In Christology Incarnation is the original source of construction of Christian theology. Without God's humiliation to descend to the world, we cannot speak of the concrete image and character of God and his salvific work and his community on earth.

It is because God appeared himself to humankind in the spatio-temporal history that we can think, speak and accept the Christology which the historical Jesus of Nazareth was both the Son of God and the Son of David, whose true perfect divinity and true perfect humanity made him become the archetype of all human beings and through his mission, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension he opened a new way for sinners to approach God.

After the enlightenment, Kant's critical philosophy affords a new conception of the value of estimating tradition. Following this influence, liberal theology radically attacked traditional

Christian orthodox Christology. They call with a high voice for a "return to the Jesus of history", in which they overstate the humanity of Jesus Christ and omit his divinity, as their idealistic purpose is that all human beings imitate the paragon and then the Kingdom of God can be realized in the world. The consequence is that their idealistic humanism leads to more and more people (including Christians) having difficulty believing and accepting that the central concepts of the Gospel are Incarnation, Virgin birth, Miracles, Resurrection and Ascension.

Although Neo-orthodox theology spares no effort in its fight against the too humanized theology and to reconstruct the traditional orthodoxy in order to keep and sustain pure Christian faith, the constant secularisation and materialism of the western church causes human beings to be lost to the secular world, which makes the church lose the dynamic living spiritual life and also makes God feel regret for the sad phenomenon that many church buildings have become historical cultural relics only as visiting places.

Today's Christology appears in various forms by the impact of the change of philosophy, science and human environment, but not every kind yields interest for the church, and even some theories are rather ridiculous. Which kind of Christology does the church need to provide rich spiritual life and to call God's sons and daughters back to his community?

I think the faithful Christ and the historical Jesus should be identical and cannot be separated and divided into two persons (Christ in heaven and Jesus on earth). His perfect human nature and perfect divine nature should be similarly described and proclaimed in the church and theology. Thus, we can learn from him and imitate his archetypal being to achieve the aim, so that we should be concerned for the world in the same way Jesus Christ helped those weak,

sick, abandoned, depressed and suffering human beings. More importantly, we must emphasize the dynamic living spiritual life, which we expect in the eschatological future, just as Jesus Christ possessed rich life in the Heavenly Father and warned his disciples that his Kingdom does not belong to this world. He required of Christians that they should wait for the New Holy City where he will dwell and live together with all human beings who are chosen by his precious blood.

3.5 *The Cosmic Christ*

Bishop K. H. Ting is a distinguished leader of the church and also an outstanding theologian in modern China. He has travelled a very different road and his experiences are varied and diverse, moving from western missionary control of the Chinese Church to a Chinese Church independent after Liberation; then through the beginning of the Three-Self Movement to Anti-Rightist Campaign; seeing religious persecution in the Cultural Revolution being replaced by evangelism's great revival after the economic reform. So he is very familiar with both the background of western and indigenous theology and the needs of contemporary Chinese people.

As the church's leader in a socialist country, Ting must be cautious in supervising the enormous Church of China, recognizing the previously vast number of denominations of which it is now composed. Ting's theological thought synthesizes the Social Gospel and Fundamentalism and also absorbs the traditional Chinese culture, importantly through his religious and social experience leading to a Cosmic Christology. He conceives his theology in five aspects:

- God's love

- Reconciling Gospel
- Archetypal Being
- Church unity
- Truth, Goodness and Beauty all belong to Christ

3.5.1 *God's Love*

Ting believes that only those people who have themselves experienced suffering can really understand the rich love of God, because in suffering they have tasted the heavenly gift that is God's particular grace, love and consolation; as Psalm 23 describes "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and staff, they comfort me." The prophet Hosea (11:4), refers to God intimately as the one who secures us with rein, leads us with bonds of love, lifts us like a little child to the parent's own cheek and bends down to feed us.

During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese Christians experienced serious persecution and were arbitrarily trampled upon, but God's love had constantly been with them. Thus, their faith not only was not lost by force, but also was made steadfast and strengthened by the suffering Christ as "part of God, not any theology of Christ's natures, which moves us, excites us, impels us to surrender ourselves to his will of love, and to be bearers and vehicles of this over the world" (*The Theological Task in China*, 1988). Otherwise God's love has stretched out to Chinese people who were wounded by the terrible havoc. In the long period of rigid and ruthless class struggle, people desperately needed the warmth of love. "God is love, he who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:6); and "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16). Under the influence of the theology of process, Ting

particularly stresses the love of God as mother's love too! Therefore, Chinese Christians and Chinese people accepted the great love of God.

3.5.2 Reconciling Gospel

This Gospel is founded on the proclamation that God is love, and the love is concentrated in the Incarnation in which God humbled himself to become a human being and to be crucified on the cross for all human beings, thereby opening a new way to reconciliation. God reconciles humanity to himself and human beings to each other. Ting perceived that the incarnated, crucified, risen and ascended Christ is the Lord Creator who upholds the universe with his word of power. Through him, humanity is reconciled to God and witnesses to reconciliation in the world.

After many years of antagonism and struggle, the suffering people hoped for reconciliation, but at the same time, stability and unity are vital to national construction, and therefore, favourable for reconciliation also. Reconciliation depends on the reconciling Gospel of Christ through which, because Christ reconciles us to God, all people can be reconciled to each other:

How we need the curative powers of love! We must establish between people close and loving relationships, understanding relationships, considerate relationships, tolerant and forgiving relationships" (*A Reconciling Faith*, 1986).

Here, Ting especially stresses that the church must incarnate the love of God, and make all people believe that the church is a home of love, so that they can be willing to return to this home and finds warmth, trust, security, love and spiritual life.

3.5.3 *Archetypal Being*

Ting understands the great personality of Jesus Christ through a more biblical theology. On the one hand Jesus Christ so loved the world that he substituted himself for it, becoming the great personal Redeemer and Saviour. On this point, Ting finds agreement with the soteriologically concerned Chinese fundamentalists.

However, Jesus Christ also taught the Sermon on the Mount, that is the most perfect ethic and morality of humankind, and Jesus' preaching and lifestyle confirmed that he did not come to be served but to serve. This conception is the source of the doctrine that Chinese Social Gospellers advocate to build the Kingdom of God on earth. Of course Ting's thought of Archetypal Being by no means simply synthesizes fundamentalism and Social Gospel, he discovers that traditional Chinese culture implies more rich meanings and contents to understand the paragon of Jesus; such as goodness, kindness, love, justice, piety etc. Therefore, Chinese intellectuals can embrace the Christian faith.

3.5.4 *The Unity of the Church*

Western missionaries set up more than one hundred denominations among which they usually squabbled and attacked one another's theology. When the foreign missionaries left, the important question was how Chinese Christians could construct a united Chinese Church in new China. Through forty years of the Three-Self Movement, the Chinese Church has entered into the post-denominational period with the exception of three small groups. Despite the many problems the Church has to face, it is speedily expanding.

Ting emphasizes that St. Paul's expounding on the unity of the church that among Christians there is one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all. Thus, according to the principles of mutual respect, consolidation and unity, every local church's worship can adopt different vigorous and living practices, and as to this Ting proclaims that official church and family church both belong to one Chinese church (some people always exclude the family church from the Chinese Church), because whosoever believes in Jesus' name is God's son or daughter, and belongs to one Christ's body. Therefore Christians should unite with one another just as Jesus Christ is united with the Father and the Holy Spirit. If the Chinese Church can only go the way of unity then she can guide numerous Chinese Christians and attract more Chinese people to convert to God; thus, she can also witness to Jesus Christ's teaching of the unity of Christians on earth.

3.5.5 Truth, Goodness and Beauty all belong to Christ

Ting firmly believes that the Cosmic Christ upholds and sustains the universe with his word of power because in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. Thus, the philosopher's truth, the moralist's goodness, the artist's beauty, the scientist's axiom and real human love are all created and controlled by the Cosmic Christ. Besides the particular revelation of Incarnation, we can also partly recognize the knowledge of God through the mysterious nature that is the handiwork of God himself, which leads to human beings having no excuse before God.

Ting considers nature and super-nature not to be contradictory of each other, but concordant. He explains this to quote Aquinas' words, "Grace does not negate nature but fulfils it" (*The*

Task of Theology, 1957). So, we cannot deny and destroy traditional Chinese culture that similarly implies the Cosmic Christ reveals truth, goodness and beauty to the Chinese people. For instance, the "Three-Character Rhyme" well-known to every family, "At birth, a person is good by nature". In particular we can discover the significance of Tao, of which Lao Zi wrote:

There is already begotten before Heaven and earth came into being: serenely silent, peacefully alone, eternally faithful, the immovable Mover, like the caring Mother of all things. I do not know its name and describe it as Tao (Dao De Jing, Chapter 25).

In response, Ting considers that we,

...still find it impossible to ignore the latent image of God in each human being and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the world...we do not want to discount all tradition outside the church (*No Longer Strangers*, p. 31)

Thereby, Chinese intellectuals, whom Ting calls "cultural Christians", more easily understand and accept the Cosmic Christ, for everything is in accordance with the standard of the Cosmic Christ's teaching. In western theology, with the same meaning K. Rahner calls them "anonymous Christians".

K. H. Ting's Cosmic Christology founded on biblical theology and traditional Chinese culture, is also indebted to western theology. Although he does not use the label "Liberation Theology" like the third world theologians, his reconciling Gospel, in essence, already implies the rich meaning of liberation, that is to say, he is concerned for human beings that they should be liberated, not only from Evil, but also from the constraints of social environment. As in the theology of Reconciliation, he emphasises:

Reconciliation is the continuation of liberation, its expansion and development, a way of creating conditions for a more profound liberation" (*A Reconciling Faith*, 1986).

This might be an important reason for his feeling about the democratic movement of students in 1989, in that his Cosmic Christological theory is actually practised in his political theology. Otherwise Ting, like other pathfinders of Christian indigenisation, has prepared a new way to approach the mystical and incarnate Cosmic Christ which encourages and stimulates Chinese theological scholars to research and excavate more and more new insights of the universal Christ in eastern culture, contributing to the ecumenical church.

Ting's method of philosophical theology in his Cosmic Christ is rather different from that of western theologians, because he finds the way from eastern culture, and especially expounds the new significance of Lao Zi's Dao De Jing with a Christian insight. Western theologians way almost directly interpret this theory from Scripture and western philosophy, for example, Allan D. Galloway, in his famous work, *The Cosmic Christ*, elaborates the development of a doctrine of cosmic redemption from the Old Testament and the New testament to the patristic thoughts, then from Kant's and Hegel's philosophy to the modern formulation. If Kant's Transcendence and Hegel's Absolute Spirit can lead a way to cosmic redemption, Lao Zi's Tao, including the meaning of Transcendence and Absolute Spirit even more rich significance, can similarly brings us into the field of the Cosmic Christ. Importantly, we must correctly understand its real meaning, otherwise we will be trying to draw a tiger and end up with the likeness of a dog, or confuse one thing with another.

Even though we can find many proofs of the Cosmic Christ in the Bible. However, Chinese fundamentalists find it difficult to agree to this view because of their belief that everything outside Christianity belongs to the secular, or evil world, or other religions and philosophies. Their narrow conservative eyesight dictates that Christ is merely limited to Christendom, and

is the personal Saviour only of Christians who have really accepted Him as their Lord. Non-Christians have nothing to do with Christ. Therefore, Ting's Cosmic Christ has no echo in the hearts of many Christians. Radical fundamentalists seriously attack it as a non-orthodox theory that confuses the doctrine of the redemption of Christ, with a viewpoint of self-cultivation to other religions.

However, Ting's Cosmic Christ has aroused sympathy among some Chinese intellectuals and scholars who are regarded as "Culture-Christians". The reason is that these "Culture-Christians" who are nurtured in the traditional philosophy, morality and mythic thought are interested in investigating and learning that Christianity implies some of their shared religious elements. But in Chinese culture there is never the consciousness of salvation, only "freedom and unfetteredness". Human beings, possessing religious feeling, always need a Saviour to help them come into transcendence. Thus, under the background of traditional culture, intellectuals easily recognize and accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Of course, their faith is different from *real* Christians, for they do not publicly admit that they are Christians nor go to church often. This phenomenon is a special religious after economic reformation. At the same time it is a pretty knotty problem for theologians. Sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish Culture-Christians from Daoists, Confucians and Buddhists. I am not sure that pluralism in Christianity, espoused by some western theologians, can help us understand and clarify the speciality of religion.

3.6 *Crisis of Challenges*

Seen from outside, the post-denomination Chinese Church has been emerging into a picture of prosperity since the economic reforms. This seems very exciting and encouraging for those

western churches that are declining day by day, but in fact the church, with believers increasing too rapidly, is concealing a latent crisis. These challenges come from the church itself and from social change. However, in the thriving growth of the church observers optimistically acknowledge that the Chinese Church on average builds one church-building and ten meeting-points, and have difficulty in discovering or do not wish to think of what is bearing his appearance, in which there are some serious problems such as: a three-self theology and an indigenising theology, different denominational traditions, church systems, quality of believers, relationship of church with society, and so on.

These challenges seem too great for the current aged leadership to confront; yet their successors are too young. Of course, we cannot escape from these difficulties regarded as a crisis in the church, even if we have no way to resolve them temporarily, or only concentrate on pastoral work. We should prepare a smooth road to connect to the new century church for new generations, otherwise they will also encounter the same trouble left by our generation.

These challenges come mainly from inside the church itself, and from society. After Liberation, the Chinese Church has carried out three-self principles: self-government, self-propagation and self-support, their purpose is that the church must divorce from western missionaries, and educate Christians who love the nation and love a religion of individuals.

The three-self movement has persisted in the Church for fifty years, and we cannot completely deny the achievement to the extent by which the Chinese Church has changed its image as a foreign religion in most Chinese minds. The Chinese Church has constructed itself so that it is completely independently from foreign support. Importantly most denominations have mixed together to form a Chinese Church in spite of several continuing small groups.

But after the movement of fifty years, what is the theology of three-self? Except for the empty political slogan of "love the nation and the religion of individuals," can we discover a little theological significance to guide the church and satisfy the need of the broad mass of believers?

As to this sensitive question, at the end of the eighties, Bishop Ting was aware of it and many church leaders have now begun to discuss how to resolve it. It is a great pity that the democratic movement in 1989 led to the consequence in which three-self as the symbol of love the nation and love the religion of individuals may not be questioned, but must be held high as gospel truth. Apparently, it is not harmonious with the speedily developing Chinese Church, yet at the same time it is a great danger for the construction of Chinese theology.

In recent years the indigenisation of the church and theology has become a popular subject because three-self theology being so uninteresting some perceptive scholars and theologians transfer the political tool to theological investigation. Perhaps Chinese theological indigenisation is different from American Black theology, Latin-American Liberation theology, South Korean MingJung theology and Philippino Grass theology, since their theologians can freely consider, think and discuss the concrete situation of their Christians, including the spiritual and material needs of individuals, family and nation, politics and economy, culture and morality, and so on. But in the special environment of the present China, anyone's thinking, speaking and action must be over cautious or one could put oneself in endless trouble. Hence Chinese theological discussion is difficult to penetrate in depth. It seems to be seen that the indigenised theology still remains in the 40's or 50's.

Chinese theological contextualisation confronts two difficult problems; one is how to interpret the Gospel's actual significance to Chinese people by reference to Chinese traditional culture; the other is how to help Chinese spiritual, material, political, economic, moral and cultural needs in transferring from a backward feudal-socialist society into a prosperous and powerful civilized modern society. Thus, the indigenised theology takes a very heavy load which asks that on the one hand it must insist on the biblical and doctrinal tradition; on the other hand it must inculture Chinese Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist morality, philosophy, mysticism and pietism; at the same time it should pay a good deal of attention to what is the urgent need of people during the process of modernization. I wonder whether the leaders of the Chinese Church can be conscious of their great vocation for the future of the church in the new century.

Following the deeper and wider reforms of the economy the relative freedom brought about the result that in many areas there appeared "family churches", which do not join in the three-self church, and always attack and oppose it. This family church seems to be a new kind of denomination that leads to conflict and division in the church. Due to government policy permitting it to exist, its influence is becoming stronger, and is increasingly a threat to the three-self church. How to resolve the confrontation between the two is still a puzzle. This is not enough to cause the three-self church embarrassment.

Since the eighties, some denominations like Adventist Sabbath Day, Jesus' Family, Little Flock and True Jesus Church have been a quite strong force, influencing the three-self church in many places. Even though the three-self church has proclaimed that denominations are long since past, some old denominations have become quite active, and in some places different denominational Christians attack each other. When some foreign friends asked

about these things taking place in the three-self church, the leaders of the church felt awkward and at a loss for an answer. What kind of theology is our present need? Breaking all old denominations is easy, but building a new theological system is very difficult! The old denominational system is destroyed; the three-self theology is too political; and the indigenised theology is only beginning. So it is not difficult to imagine what is the status of the three-self church in these rapidly changing times.

Because present Chinese theology is in crisis, together with the influence of feudal superstition on Chinese people for several thousand years, common Chinese Christians' level is not very high, especially in the countryside areas. Their belief is oversimplified in that they believe that Christ is precisely God, as Chinese *RiHuangDaDi* (the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient Heavenly Emperor), who can protect people, grace people and punish people, and can control their destiny. So the purpose of their believing in Jesus is two fold, one is to gain material richness and well-being and the other is that the spirit may rise up to Heaven. In order to pander to this satisfaction many ministers' sermons emphasize doing good things and not bad things. For doing good things, Christ blesses and for bad things, Christ damns.

Other biblical teachings seem far removed from simple Christians. It is rather serious that conservative fundamentalists in particular, put undue emphasis on individual salvation and thus much in the secular world is seen as a temptation that must be given up, leading believers to become isolated from human society. This phenomenon cannot but make one pessimistic for the future of the Church in the new century in which China is being transformed into a modernized and civilized society.

It is for these reasons that the church system has landed in a predicament. Some sensible church leaders are similarly aware of suffering consciousness. How can the church cope with this knotty problem? In the present situation, when the government stresses that keeping stability is above all, no one makes any move without careful thought. But during the present period, how and what to do can help improve the church system. At least, we can find these sharp problems.

Firstly, what is the relationship of the Chinese Christian Council and the local church? Even the CCC, as the highest organization does not have the right to help resolve problems in a local church. Secondly, what is the relationship of common believers and clergy? Do common believers have the right to join in the election of their church leaders? There develops all kinds of sacred work, but because of the gap between old and young ministers, with old ones always tightly holding their senior position so that young ones have no chance to do more work for the church. Fourthly, how to make the family church united with the normal church, thus abolish the hostility and estrangement between them, making the propagation of the gospel far more conducive to Chinese people? Fifthly, the most sensitive difficulty is how to discern the correct relationship of the government and the church because in many churches the government often interferes in a lot of things in the church.

Of course, there are many other problems in the church, which will not be discussed here. Some Catholic leaders feel optimistic for the future of their church, because once the diplomatic relations of China and Rome are set up, the Chinese Catholic Church will do everything according to Roman law. However, how will the Chinese Protestant Church confront the future when China enters into a new democratic and free period if the church system cannot be reformed?

On the other hand the crisis in the church comes from the change of society. Following further economic reforms and modernization, people's lives have been improving constantly. Money is the tool of commodity, and its circulation has become the all-powerful key in most personal minds, so-called, "money talking" or "with the money you can make the devil turn the millstone". Because of the lure of money, a man can give up everything in order to get money, in spite of law, rule and principle or morality, conscience and faith. Corruption and degeneration are spread over every corner in China. Even if the church is all the time regarded as a holy place, it is hard to avoid this misfortune. It is not difficult to imagine as a consequence that some young clergymen leave the church to make money. Nevertheless this has a direct relation to the low political status and poor economic situation of young clerics. The policy of abolishing religion in the Cultural Revolution could not destroy the church, but the money of modernization will bring about damage. This terrible tragedy must cause church leaders to pay attention to this incisive social problem.

At the same time the other danger is that the integrative moral system will be seriously destroyed. Traditional morality has been overthrown and abandoned during the Cultural Revolution but so-called Communist new morality, a gross deception, has been wantonly trampled on by communist officers themselves; particularly after the economic reforms examples of high officers' corruption and degeneration come to light one after another, so that there appears this abnormal phenomenon, that most people on the one hand hold historical nihilism which denies all values of history, while on the other hand they suspect communism as the illusory Utopia which cannot be accepted as its claims go beyond actual social reality, thus they do not believe anything except money. The consequence is that in order to make money they dare do anything in spite of the constraint of morality and ethics. Professional,

personal, collective, public and social morality has gradually declined. Mountain bandits, road tyrants, river robbers; hijack, deception, stealing, adultery, prostitution and traffic in narcotics etc.,—all kinds of criminal offence can be found in all local areas. How horrible these sins are! Once morality is completely reduced to nothing, the national spirit will vanish, then how to talk about the national civilization? Now new-Confucians have begun to propagate the new values of morality in Confucianism. Can Jesus' Mountain Sermons help us reverse the trend that morality goes from bad to worse? Maybe the sage of the benevolence in Chinese traditional culture and the perfection of the holy love in Christianity could bring new change to the Chinese, if they could follow them.

3.7 Confront the Future

In the Chinese Church, it may be said that Christology is positioned in the starting blocks. Through the havoc of history, the perspective of the Chinese Church is the same as the nation and everything was destroyed and overthrown. Very few theologians, who were able to investigate and develop Chinese theology, survived the disaster. Furthermore, after the economic reform, old ministers and scholars have been very busy in the restoration of churches and seminaries, and it is difficult for them to take time away from their complex, strenuous and sacred duties in order to sit quietly considering Chinese theology. Thus, the construction of the Chinese Church's theology is the most important fundamental task for a new generation.

Today the voice of "Chinese Church indigenization" is still sonorous, but the question remains how to indigenise? Up to the present day, we find, although with some difficulty, a satisfying answer in the conclusions of some theologians' research. Does traditional Chinese

culture directly import meaning into Christian theology or does traditional Chinese culture, as a symbol, explain and disclose the varied meanings of Christian theology?

From the insight of Jungel's Christology, in which he applies Aristotle's metaphorical theory to understand Christ himself as the metaphor to explain the mystery of God, we can similarly try to exploit the wider and deeper field of Christology with the symbol of traditional Chinese culture. If we put traditional Chinese culture directly into Christian theology, then the indigenised Chinese Church could become a mixture of Confucian-Christianity and Taoist-Christianity. However, Christians will not be able to accept such an ambiguous mixture. Therefore the indigenisation of Chinese theology using eastern cultural language must demonstrate an abundant and living Christian theology that all the more requires to be fit with the vision of the Bible and the tradition of the church, and the spiritual life of Christians.

The indigenisation of theology in the Chinese church does not exclude the theological contributions of other churches in the world. On the contrary, we should attempt to exploit and excavate new insights of the rich Christ in different situations and ages to share the revelation of God with each other.

Through exhaustive investigations, some western theologians tend towards the eschatological concept "Christus Consummator" which stresses reconciliation in Christ as the consummation of all things, advocated by B. F. Westcott and F. Olosson. G. M. Newlands uses the concept to focus upon the many dimensions of Christology and their interrelation. He claims that Christology has at least these dimensions, according to his analysis in *God In Christian Perspective*:

- Christology has a central *historical* dimension, which is concerned with Jesus of Nazareth who lived, died and was raised from the dead in particular circumstances in a particular time.
- Christology has a *personal* dimension, which emphatically states that God relates to human beings. We can understand that God is personal through the person of Jesus Christ in creation and reconciliation.
- Christology has a *political* dimension, which refers to the fact that Jesus was heavily involved in the politics of his day because he came up against the political realities of the day with increasing frequency. His missions could easily be construed as having political significance.
- Christology has an *anthropological* dimension, which still maintains that in the Christian gospel, God is especially related to humankind, who is the creator of man; which also values that Christology may benefit from the skills of the disciplines of social and cultural anthropology.
- Christology has a *social* dimension, which may be worked out in relation to the whole range of the social sciences, including politics and economics. The economic dimensions of self-giving love are as appropriate as the political or philosophical dimensions.
- Christology has a *cosmological* dimension, which subsumes that God is creator, reconciler and redeemer of the entire physical universe. Through Jesus Christ comes new creation, the redemption of the physical cosmos and the reconciliation of the physical and the spiritual in Christ.
- Christology has a *pneumatological* dimension, which declares that the Spirit who creates Christ-likeness is the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ, and one with the Spirit of God. This is important for understanding the action of God as Spirit working mysteriously in the worship of the church and in the world.
- Christology has a *theological* dimension, which is that it is the revelation of the nature of God, creator and reconciler. We approach to the knowledge of God by faith alone because God in his revelation in Christ is still a mysterious hidden presence to the church. However, this is just at the centre of Christology. The fact of Christ means reconciliation, present and eschatological, for all human beings.

Professor Newlands has worked out these dimensions of Christology that could help Chinese Christians understand the rich Christ, so as to make us open the narrow-short sightedness of conservative fundamentalism. Of course Christological dimensions would, perhaps, be still developed and unearthed other more abundant meanings by different theologians in different situations especially in the theology of the third world.

Contemporary theologians spend much time on the challenge of the secularisation of the world and the church as shown above. At present I hold an optimistic attitude to the rising Chinese church, but following the economic reformation, Chinese society has been experiencing great change in which the process of secularisation gradually intrudes into various spheres, including some churches. It is difficult to predict whether, after some years of social secularisation, the Chinese church will present the same phenomenon of the current western church. Thus, from now, we should be aware of, and investigate the ongoing development of Chinese society and church, as Prof. Chen Zeming has laid stress, "understanding our environment and understanding ourselves" and insisting that "we must also use our moral principles and the spiritual criteria of our faith to weigh everything in the new China" since the middle of this century (*Theological Construction in the Chinese Church*, 1956).

Even today, Chen's thought is still a very important guidance to the future of Chinese theology because it comes from the ecclesiastical practice. Indeed social morality in China has been gradually declining in parallel with economic reformation. This should be one of the most important problems addressed by Chinese Christians. When most Chinese people lose their faith (either Communism or other traditional religions), individual and social morality will be changed for the worse. The consequence of this is that more and more people are afraid of imagining and worrying about the future of modernized China. Therefore, the rising Chinese Church should accept the vocation that we must bring God's love, faith, justice, truth, freedom, peace, morality and spirituality, all performed in Jesus Christ, to all Chinese people. Only when Christ's power dominates everyone's innermost heart, may we hope that through the effort of several generations, modernised China can achieve high material and spiritual civilization.

Morality and Spirituality are always the two essential elements in Christianity. Jesus Christ emphatically states and completely performs them in his preaching and action. It is because of their attributing to the human natural reality that Christianity is widely spread over the world. Therefore, whenever the church loses them, it will lose its dynamic vigorous life and might even disappear.

What can Chinese traditional culture contribute to Christology as the cornerstone of Christianity? There are several aspects that may be of value for western theologians. They are:

- The eternal Word (Tao)
- The creative Word (Tao)
- The transcendental Word (Tao), these concepts belong to Taoism of Laozi and Zhuangzi
- The personal Word (Heaven)
- The Word (Heaven) of declaring Torah (Principle)
- The union of Heaven and man
- The benevolence
- All can be brothers in the four seas. These belong to Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius.

The relationship of Christology and these concepts have been discussed in the second part of the essay. Morality and Spirituality are the main topic in the different thoughts of Chinese culture. I hope that Chinese traditional culture can help a Christian (whether he/she is Chinese or a foreigner) understand Christology more deeply. Chinese culture has undergone no less than five thousand years and still is in full vigour, it possesses an inner dynamic

vigour. If it can effectively communicate with other cultures, it will bring them new motivation and power.

Love (Benevolence) as the eternal theme in human history should be emphasized in Christianity, for if there is no love, Christianity itself cannot exist in the world. God's love shows to us that his Only Begotten Son was crucified for our sins. God is love and Heaven is benevolent too! In suffering, Chinese people always long for the love of God (the perfect benevolence). Ting's theology of love, influenced by theologians of the process, claims that God is the God of creative-responsive love, who loves his creatures and through Christ, makes the imperfect ones reach the perfect in the process of human events.

The construction of Chinese theology and church should set up its basis on the love of God and the benevolence of the traditional culture. A Chinese Christian should be improved to become, both the perfect being (God-man) as Heavenly the Father, and the benevolent sage (Heaven-man), that can be accepted and understood by most Chinese scholars. Because the Heaven-man has completed, not only his own nature and personality, but also others' nature and personality, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth and he may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion.

How can the church and society emerge from the current serious secular scene that opposes morality and spirituality? Christianity must unremittingly fight against secularisation in order to survive in the world. On this point, many western theologians provide a lot of good ideas for us. We can possibly seek insight from the thoughts of Barth, Rahner, Baillie, Schillebeeckx, Hans Küng, Moltmann, Pannenberg, Jungel and Sobrino etc. Even though we cannot literally copy their views to apply to the particular environment of the Chinese Church.

However, if we construct Chinese theology according to the background of the Chinese church and society through the enlightenments of these theologians' theories, then we may be sure that we can open a new way for the future of the Chinese Church. I will now engage with Rahner's Christology to inform my thinking for the Chinese situation.

3.8 *Rahner's Christology and Chinese Theology*

Even though we do not know whether or not Rahner had been interested in Chinese theology, his theological view is harmonious with it in many aspects. Of course, Rahner's way through which he deals with in his Christology is different from Chinese theologians'. Since Rahner is positioned in the particular situation where he grew up, studied and worked under the influence of the Ignatian Exercises, the transcendental Thomism and Heidegger's existentialism, and also perhaps Hegel's absolute spirit, so his thinking and method are difficult to divorce from the shadow of these thoughts, but for them he can drive a light carriage on a familiar road and can speculate on a reasonable synthesis of theology. Thus, Rahner's theology has become the effective defence against the theory of the death of God and atheism from the 1950s.

It was at this time that atheism began to control all China, and as a result, Chinese theological research was forced to cease for nearly thirty years. However, spiritual work never ceased and the Chinese Church has been growing more quickly than at any time through the long period of suffering.

The development of the church requires that Chinese theologians must have a theological theory to guide a mass of believers. Because of its special environment, the Chinese Church

cannot copy western theology and similarly cannot directly apply traditional religious theory. As to this, Chinese theology, first of all, must excavate new insight from the Bible to comprehend what is the revelation of God to us (this why biblical theology is most important for Chinese Christians). Otherwise for Chinese believers living with a background of traditional culture, the theology must be indigenised before Chinese people can understand and accept it. That we do this is not to say that we completely exclude western theology, on the contrary, the developing Chinese theology needs to learn many things from all kind of theologies in order to enrich the truth of Christ.

It is for this inter-relative reason that we find that Rahner's Christology in some points can help Chinese Christians clearly catch the significance of Incarnation in which Jesus Christ is precisely Very God and Very Man, who as a particular person for faith and as the absolute saviour of the world transcends us to communicate with God, and Who both provides spiritual life for us and brings about social justice, political freedom, economic richness and truly human morality to all human beings.

3.8.1 Dialectical Relationship of Yin and Yang

The relationship of Yin and Yang is illustrated by the Tai-chi-tu, the diagram of the Great Ultimate in the I Jing. The diagram consists of interlocking but differed Yin (darkness) and Yang (light), in it the Yin portion contains a Yang dot similarly the Yang portion contains a Yin dot thus both form a harmonious integrated unity. The complementary relationship cannot be separated and confused, if so, it will break the harmony of the Great Ultimate to lead to the result that heaven and earth will be greatly disordered. Yin and Yang not only depend on each other for existence, they can keep the balance of mutual unity.

The relationship of humanity and divinity in Jesus Christ all the time becomes the central question in the theological debate. Perhaps it is easier to understand the relationship if we deal with it according to the dialectical relationship of Yin and Yang in Chinese ancient philosophy. Christ's humanity can be regarded as Yin (darkness) and of his being the creator can be regarded as Yang (light) because of his being a particular person as the Father's only begotten Son in Heaven. Christ's Yin is completely the same as human beings' and his Yang completely the same as the Heavenly Father's. So Christ possesses perfect humanity and perfect divinity. In him, both form a completely harmonious integrated unity, as does the dialectical relationship of Yin and Yang, never broken in his unique character—without change, without confusion, without division and without separation. Therefore we can escape the endless argument around Christ's humanity and divinity, which has been caused by Alexandrian and Antiochian Christology; even till today this theological conflict may still carry on.

From Rahner's theological anthropological Christology, we can discover that even though Rahner does not apply Chinese ancient philosophy for his theological analysis, his elucidating relationship of the particular person and the absolute saviour in Jesus Christ has an immediate relation to the dialectical relationship of Yin and Yang. Rahner claims that Jesus is a human being because of the Word, indeed becoming flesh, but that he is different from a common person because of his doing the special work that his mission, teaching a mass of people, healing a lot of the sick driving out demons and his resurrection shows us his supernatural substance. Christ's transcendence makes him able to take the role that can help other people to divorce from sin and to leap the estrangement of God and humans reaching to communication with God.

Therefore, Rahner deduces his central view that the "hypostatic union" of Jesus Christ makes him possess both the absolutely perfect self-consciousness of God and the absolutely perfect self-communication of God. This statement actually implies two meanings, one is that the humanity of historical Jesus is perfect because of his absolute self-consciousness of God; the other is that the divinity of the Word of God is also perfect because of his absolute self-communication of God. In Rahner's position the precondition of the "hypostatic union" cannot be changed as some theologians emphasizing "anhypostasis" or "enhypostasis". If the "hypostatic union" is changeable or alternative, the position of Jesus Christ as the absolute saviour would not be ensured, leading to the consequence that Christian belief over nearly two thousand years must be disordered. Only the historical Jesus was incarnated in the world, absolutely possessing the self-consciousness of God. He indeed brings the possibility of revealing God's self-consciousness to human beings. Similarly, the redemptive Christ was resurrected in Heaven, absolutely possessing the self-communication of God, and in him is precisely the possibility of bringing human beings into God's self-communication. Thus, through the revelation of the historical Jesus as hypostatized with God, as in his saying "Believe in me that I am in the Father and the Father in me," human beings can realize and accept God in accordance with either human rational or human spiritual understanding.

It is possible to try to analyse and understand Rahner's "hypostatic union" according to the relationship of Yin and Yang in Chinese ancient philosophy. The "Hypostatic Union" is completely expressed in the diagram of the Great Ultimate, that is to say, the historical human Jesus possessing God's self-consciousness regarded as Yin and the eternal divine Christ possessing God's self-communication regarded as Yang, both co-existing with interdependence form an integrated harmonious unity. Without the historical Jesus (Yin) there is

no salvific Christ (Yang), for Christ's divinity must depend on Jesus' humanity, and *vice versa*. Or else once the reciprocal balance of the relationship of Yin and Yang is broken, the Great Ultimate would be disordered, that is, the "hypostatic union" would be changed its existential foundation and structure, which certainly can have the consequence that the historical Jesus cannot perfectly possess God's self-consciousness, and yet cannot reveal God's self-consciousness to human beings, and further, the redemptive Christ cannot perfectly possess God's self-communication and cannot bring human beings into God's self-communication. Therefore we can make this deduction that the perfect humanity and perfect divinity in Jesus Christ seeming completely to be Yin and Yang in the Great Ultimate, consist of the integrated harmonious unity—the "hypostatic union"—which is the identical with the announcement of Jesus himself: "I and the Father are one."

As to the dialectical relationship of Yin and Yang, someone could suspect that this relationship seems too mysterious to comprehend, and therefore, making it difficult to understand the "hypostatical union" in terms of the Great Ultimate. We must not deny that the relationship of Yin and Yang in Chinese ancient philosophy implicating a kind of special mysterious colour. However, actually nothing can be divorced from the principle of Yin and Yang, e.g. the relationship of heaven and earth, water and fire, husband and wife, cold and hot, hungry and full and so on.

How do we keep the balance of the relationship of both in their co-existence? Perhaps by the doctrine of the golden mean in Confucianism that means that to treat everything by the impartial and appropriate way can help us catch hold of the integrated harmonious unity in the mutual relationship of Yin and Yang. Seeing the dialectical relationship of everything inward

and outward, we can infer the mystical and obvious relationship of divinity and humanity in the "Hypostatical Union".

3.8.2 *Transcendence and Immanence*

In religious philosophy, theological philosophers always seem to wish to distinguish transcendence and immanence in their treatment of the character of God and human beings. Because of God's being in Heaven, it tends to be considered that God is wholly transcendent; and because of human beings' being in the world human beings are regarded as immanent. But in practical religious experience it is not difficult to realize that transcendence and immanence not only cannot be distinctly separated, but also to keep the immediate relation of inter-weaving and inter-penetration. Even though God is the Creator of everything in the world, he can become a creature dwelling in the world according to His creative miraculous ability. So we can apparently understand God's transcendence and immanence in his action whether before or after the historical Jesus.

Rahner's Christology focuses on the transcendence of Jesus Christ in accordance with the principle of his theological anthropology, in which he claims that in the reason of human beings being created according to the image and likeness of God, they always orient towards entrance into the community of God by their innermost promotion; at the same time God's self-communication also all the time encourages human beings to realize and share with the beatific vision of God. Yet in human history, nobody can completely possess and enter into the beatific vision. Only the God-Man Jesus Christ as the Word of God becoming flesh is perfectly hypostatized. He possesses the absolute God's self-consciousness and the absolute God's self-communication, thus he can transcendently reveal and reflect the beatific vision of

God to human beings and bring them to approach transcendence into this community of the Godhead.

In Chinese traditional culture we discover with difficulty, that few emphasize that through the way of transcendence human beings can approach Heaven whether in philosophies or religions. That is not to say Chinese metaphysical thinking has nothing to do with transcendence, otherwise how can we understand the conception of "the union of Heaven and man"? Actually Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucianism, advocates that human beings ought to become sages by self-cultivation. This kind of self-cultivation completely relies on human immanent exercise to overcome self-desire and to be thoroughly filled with natural power. Owing to Heaven, earth and humankind existing in mutual harmony and penetrating reciprocally, human beings are constantly looking for a kind of life force to make themselves harmonize with the cosmos. The life-force as the original life-giving force is identical with Daoist "secret life" (Xuan De) as well as with Confucian "virtue of Heaven" (Tian De), the force which creates life and nourishes it, preserves and nurtures, fights noxious things and protects. When a human being is filled with this original life force, he can conquer his self-desire and enter into the realm of the spiritual joy and self-contented fullness of happiness.

How can we achieve the original life force for a common person? Confucianism emphasizes that one must self-cultivate moral character, which means that if one is able to exhaust his mind and nature, man can know and serve Heaven and become able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. He may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion, and become a perfect sage. Taoism claims that one should seek the Word (Tao) in the nature, which means that one who has obtained the Word can ascend to become a god. Buddhism advocates that one must sit in meditation to suddenly intuitively see the light of Buddha. All

of these methods belong to the immanent way to lead human beings to self-transcendence in order that human beings can harmoniously unite with Heaven and Earth.

Human beings approaching transcendence by the way of immanent self-cultivation, because of the seriously strong influence of fundamentalism, is a view that many Chinese Christians do not support, which leads them to the misgiving that it possibly produces such results such as Pantheism or Atheism. But in fact, there are still some theologians who have suggested it to enrich Christology, so for example, Chao Zichen has endeavoured to excavate the positive significance of the immanent self-cultivation which is applied with Christian meditation. From his insight we can find that Chinese immanent self-cultivation has an immediate relation to the Christian spiritual transcendence. Obviously Chinese immanent self-cultivation making human beings become sages and the Christian spiritual transcendence making human beings imitate Christ are not contradictory, but harmonious. So we can yet know pure immanence in human spiritual practice. Indeed in human spiritual experience transcendence and immanence are in inter-penetration to promote human beings entrance into perfect self-contented fullness of happiness----total communion with God.

Now we carry this topic into the content of Rahner's transcendental Christology. It is remarkable to show that Rahner's Christological view might be related to the Chinese immanent self-cultivation. Why should we think so? Because Rahner states that the historical Jesus as incarnated in the world, is not an isolated action by God, rather a part of the cosmos, albeit the climax of cosmos in evolution in which God's creative power is completely filled with Jesus to make him possess the absolute self-consciousness of God and the absolute self-communication of God so as to let him become the paragon whom human beings should imitate and follow. Thus, Jesus is precisely a perfect sage King in Chinese traditional culture,

as he has completely been endowed with the original life-force and he has himself possessed it in order that he may immanently self-cultivate to overcome conquer the temptation of Satan and of all kinds of secularization thus becoming the Sage of Chinese thought. It is this reason that human beings can follow and emulate Jesus to become the saints of God.

Of course, here we must clarify the fact that the Chinese sage king is not thoroughly identical with the absolute Saviour in Christianity, otherwise we need not have the redemptive Christ, and everyone can be rid of his sin and directly enter into communion with God only by his immanent self-cultivation. This point of view cannot be agreed with or accepted by Christians. It is because of the Chinese immanent self-cultivation, being short of the consciousness of transcendence, that Chinese philosophy has difficulty in resolving the problem of sin to reach the realm of sufficient self-contented happiness. Only through Jesus Christ as the original life-force cleansing human sins by shedding blood and bringing human beings into the paradise—which is indeed what Chinese are looking for—a realm of eternal joy and happiness, not temporary. From this analysis we can easily understand why at present more and more Chinese people go to church, a phenomenon like huge waves surging over the beach.

Transcendence and immanence both substantively belong to the action of spirituality, externally we cannot absolutely separate or distinguish them from each other. We may comprehend the relationship of both which transcendence includes immanence and immanence similarly includes transcendence. In Rahner's mystical theology and Chinese metaphysical mystery, we realize that transcendence and immanence interact in human beings' approaching to the highest community of God/Heaven. Searching transcendence and

immanence of spirituality in Christology can stretch right to pneumatology. About this kind of deeper and wider conception, here we do not discuss it further.

3.8.3 *The Perfect Person and the Sage*

Man as existential being must possess the essence of the material and the spirit and in his existential dimension. By reason of the influence of pragmatism, in human actual life one usually overemphasizes material need and neglects spiritual satisfaction so as to break the intrinsic balance. According to human existential substance, he is endowed with the supernatural element because God assumes a human nature as his own, and man is created in God's image, hence man himself is an incomprehensible mystery, always orientated towards the mystery of fullness. As man wills to be grasped by the incomprehensible One, he abandons himself to the absolute mystery. This obedient potency cannot be an individual potency alongside other potencies in the structure of human beings, but rather is objectively identical with man's essence. Thus, we can discover that man wants to be perfect of God, he must enter into the unique union with God through the way of the complete self-consciousness of God, and God's complete self-communication.

In Rahner's theological anthropology, he elaborates on the presupposition that Jesus Christ is a perfect man in the world because of his absolute obedience to the will of God. Even though he possesses the same elements of common human beings, he can completely enter into the absolute Mystery in his existential supernatural structure, by the ability of his transcendence in which he was incarnated in the world. Therefore, only Jesus regarded as the perfect person, can become the absolute saviour who can help other human beings to approach the incomprehensible One. It is more important that Jesus must be the perfect person among

ordinary human beings because he as man is precisely the immanent self-expression of God in his self-emptying in which God indeed expresses himself when he describes himself as love and manifests himself in humanity.

From this perspective we can understand that Jesus is a common creature—the Word become flesh—but he is distinct from ordinary human beings insofar as he absolutely obeys the will of God even if he can completely and freely do everything, he never abuses his freedom and power to offend God. It is for this reason that Jesus, as the perfect person, can take the responsibility of the absolute saviour in order that he can reveal the incomprehensible Mystery (God) to human beings on the one hand, and bring them to participate in the community of God on the other.

According to the understanding of Chinese traditional culture the perfect person is described as the sage. For one to be so-called, means that he can be conscious of the providence of Heaven, and Heaven endows him with a special kind of potency, in order that his humanity can become perfect by his immanent self-cultivation, hence he can take the responsibility of society. As to the perfect humanity, generally, it is to do with perfect morality that includes the five virtues: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and confidence.

Owing to the sage not coming from Heaven, everyone can become the sage by immanent self-cultivation in the precondition of knowing the providence of Heaven in which he must accept and obey the will of Heaven in his existential supernatural structure by the way of meditation. His virtue and morality should be perfect and above criticism for his vocation is to do the will of Heaven on the earth. The purpose of the mission which heaven gives to the sage, is that he should perform the whole of social benevolence, righteousness and morality, for his endowed

grace not merely serves himself but also must bring about benefit to all human beings. So that the sage who comprehends the providence of Heaven thoroughly abandons his own desires in order to approach the harmonious unity of Heaven, earth and humankind. However, here we must point out that the sage himself cannot change his limited humanity to become Heaven in any case, but only as a perfect person insights the providence of Heaven and discloses and practises it in the world.

From the above perspective we can easily derive some points of similarity between the perfect person of Rahner and the sage of Chinese traditional culture. These are that the man in his existential supernatural structure can overcome his desires to approach to the incomprehensible Mystery through his self-cultivation; hence he comprehends the providence of the Mystery (Heaven) and carries it out in the world. By reason of his perfection of love, kindness, virtue and morality, he becomes the paradigm of all human beings. And because of his bearing special vocation, God gives him a kind of miraculous potency to serve human beings who are persecuted, abandoned and oppressed for God's love, human morality and social justice.

Of course, it is not difficult to find the apparent distinction between the perfect person of Rahner and the sage of Chinese traditional culture. For Rahner, Jesus is the perfect person not merely by his perfect humanity, but also by his perfect divinity. As he is precisely the Word become flesh, he himself is God's self-expression, self-communication, beatific vision and grace. Yet in Chinese thinking, the sage is only an ideal perfect being, there never exists such a man in real human history. Sometimes, some have regarded the sage as a person who possesses better morality, merit and higher self-cultivation than common human beings and therefore can more completely realize the providence of Heaven and perform better behaviour

in order to make most people respect and follow him, and even, in some cases, worship him as a god. However, the sage is only a human being, his 'perfection' must be influenced by human essential limitation leading to his humanity not being absolutely perfect.

From the comparison of the perfect person of Rahner and the sage of Chinese traditional culture, we can see that both have an intrinsic immediate relation. Certainly, Rahner in dealing with this subject is not yet divorced from orthodox Christology. He particularly stresses that man, is always essentially orientated towards the incomprehensible Mystery by the decision of his existential supernatural structure, but on account of human weakness and limitation, common human beings never completely reach the Ultimate Being. However, Jesus as the incarnated Word, is a perfect human image for he not only realizes the will of the incomprehensible One but also performs his love, compassion, virtue and morality in the world, even sacrificing himself to save all human beings, who may then approach Mystery (God).

Although the sage of Chinese traditional culture does not come directly from Heaven, by reason of the precondition of human essence, that is "in the beginning human nature is good," the man can insight the providence of Heaven by his immanent self-cultivation in order that he can respect Heaven and obey the providence of Heaven. The sage's moral behaviour, including benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and good-faith, filial piety, respect for seniors, universal love, compassion for animals and even forgiveness of his enemies and so on, is so perfect that he becomes the paradigm of human beings. From the multi-dimensions of humanity in the sage we can more deeply and widely understand the richly profound implications of the perfect person of Jesus in Rahner's transcendental Christology.

Undoubtedly, because of the sage himself lacking the transcendental consciousness of divinity, he with difficulty brings other human beings towards the Ultimate Horizon, though he can exhaust his mind and nature and, he can know and serve Heaven. Human existential essence decides that man must enter into the community of Heaven (God), and then he can obtain the real joy and self-contented fullness of happiness in his supernatural structure. As to man, it would not be sufficient and perfect if we only emphasize his perfect humanity, so we should at the same time be aware of his spirituality unifying with God. By reason of this, the Confucian theologian Chao Zichen changes from homocentricity to theocentricity. This is also the same reason why nowadays more and more Chinese people wish to go to the church looking for their spiritual home. Especially, Rahner's transcendental Christology can help us to correctly explain the abnormal phenomenon that human beings need. The Mediator God-Man transcends us to reach the incomprehensible Mystery.

3.8.4 *Anonymous Christians and Cultural Christians*

Christians as the title of Christ's disciples has used for nearly two thousand years, but nowadays there have appeared some alternative names like "Anonymous Christians" and "Cultural Christians" that leaves many Christians puzzled. In the traditional biblical teaching and orthodox doctrine, there is an unequivocal distinction: either one is a Christian or he is a non-Christian. However, after the Second Vatican Council, Christianity has begun to dialogue with other religions and cultures, and this great interchange has seen the tendency to produce some new consciousness and thinking. Consequently, we can see that theologians are discussing the problems of anonymous Christians, cultural Christians and double citizens in religion. Although many Christians are suspicious regarding the possible existence of

anonymous Christians and cultural Christians, Rahner and Ting have provided us with some enlightened insight.

In his transcendental Christology, Rahner particularly elucidates the relationship of Christ and non-Christians in which a man can become an anonymous Christian if he does not deny God in his innermost heart on purpose, even though he never publicly recognizes that he is a Christian. The main reason is that, firstly, in God's self-communication Jesus Christ completely manifests God to all human beings so that human beings can directly realize and accept God through him and in him. Secondly, human existential essence decides that human beings are always orientated towards the Ultimate Mystery in their existential supernatural structures; thus human beings only find their spiritual home in the community of God and even when their material condition is most sufficient and perfect yet cannot gain real peace in their hearts. Thirdly, nature itself *is* precisely the revelation of God, and so there is no excuse for people not admitting to the fact that they have all the time been sharing God's grace and experiencing the Creator. Therefore, it can be seen that all human beings are God's sons and daughters. So long as they will participate in the community of God in their hearts and perform the will of God in their behaviour, then they are indeed anonymous Christians.

Bishop Ting's dealing with his cultural Christians with reference to the cosmic Christ comes from the source of Chinese traditional culture. He finds that it provides a good soil for the growth of Christianity. From at least two aspects of Taoist metaphysics and Confucian morality, we can deduce the consequence of cultural Christians. On one hand, Laozi's Tao (the Word) has a rich meaning. The Tao is the Creator and the caring Mother of all things, the absolute mystical Being and principle of heaven, earth and humankind. Human beings always seek for and desire to obtain the grace of Tao in order to become gods by spiritual

self-cultivation; on the other hand the precondition of Confucian morality is that "at birth, a person is good by nature," even if human growth changes one's behaviour, because of his natural essence being good, he can still immanently self-cultivate to wisdom, virtue and morality. The purpose of both of Taoism and Confucianism is to seek human truth which is precisely Chinese intellectuals' searching.

From the above we can infer that Taoist metaphysics and Confucian morality are both to be found within Christianity, but otherwise we cannot say that all religions and cultures actually belong to Christianity. However, we can extend the more deep and rich significance of Christ as one who should be described as the cosmic Christ and cannot be limited only within the realm of Christianity. Then it is an unequivocal consequence that there in fact exist some cultural Christians who for certain special reasons they do not will to declare their real identity. However, they precisely believe in God and produce a lot of good fruits of Christ. We have no right to exclude them from the church and should admit and accept them as our brothers and sisters in Christ's big family of love.

The prerequisite of assuming anonymous Christians and cultural Christians is that Christ must be the cosmic Christ through whom and in whom everything is created, maintained and supported. From natural revelation we find that the natural grace and the particular grace (the Word become flesh) is consistent in God's creation in which Christ is Alpha and Omega in the universal evolution. Although Rahner does not directly render that Christ is precisely the cosmic Christ, according to his evolutionary Christology, he indirectly emphasizes this point of view. This is properly the reflection of transcendental Thomist natural truth. And undoubtedly Ting's conception of the cosmic Christ is beneficial from Taoist Tao (the Word), that is the Mother of everything. In fact anonymous Christians and cultural Christians can

acknowledge the cosmic Christ through natural revelation, provided they do not ignore God's grace on purpose on account of human fallen and incorrigibly obstinate hearts, and sink themselves into degradation.

It is interesting that Rahner deals with this subject from traditional western thinking which originates from the Fall of man in the beginning, and Ting considers it according to the "Three Character Rhyme" of Confucius which says "at birth, a person is good by nature". Why can both work out the same consequence while on the surface, seeming to be contradictory to each other? As to Rahner, even though human original sin can lead human beings to death, by reason of human existential supernatural structure human beings are always orientated towards the transcendental God, and at the same time Jesus Christ as the absolute God's self-communication can bring human beings to recognize God and make them transcend, divorcing their sin and participating in the community of God.

Ting's way is that in the condition of the human natural essence being good human beings, his likeness for their moral behaviour as perfect just as Jesus Christ performs it in the world. For if able to exhaust his mind and nature, man can know Heaven and serve Heaven, then he is able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, and he may with Heaven and Earth, form a ternion. Thus, anonymous Christians and cultural Christians become known by the same title as those who have the grace of God and have secretly imitated Christ but do not wish to show their identity.

The conception of anonymous Christians and cultural Christians causes heated argument in the church. Some fundamentalist Christians thoroughly reject and fiercely oppose it because anonymous or cultural Christians dare not admit their identity, so that they have nothing to do

with either the church or other Christians, and as a consequence, cannot have salvation in the last day. Some theologians argue that this conception originates from the embryo of Pantheism and Deism and does not accord with orthodox doctrine and biblical teaching. But the question is how to explain the abnormal phenomenon in the world? Our Christianity cannot define ourselves in a small corner in the universe if we believe that God indeed creates everything and the Word become flesh saves all human beings. How else could we understand the teaching of St. Paul that in the end everything returns to the unity of Christ? We cannot arbitrarily judge that those who have experienced God's grace and have good conduct will be excluded from the banquet of God when Jesus comes again.

Through the above analysis of the inter-relationship of Rahner's Christology and Chinese theological thought, it is seen that Rahner's transcendental way and the Chinese immanent way have a kind of special immediate relationship. Rahner's elaborating the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ can be understood by the dialectical relationship of Yin and Yang of Chinese ancient philosophy, so that we can keep the balance of God-Man to get rid of the confusion caused by over-emphasis of his humanity or over-emphasis of his divinity. Rahner's transcendental method lets him conclude that Jesus possesses the absolute self-consciousness of God and the absolute self-communication of God to reveal and bring human beings into the community of God. Similarly Chinese immanent self-cultivation makes human beings enter into the harmonious unity of Heaven, Earth and humankind.

Rahner stresses that Jesus, as the absolute saviour, must be the perfect person, and the Chinese conception of "the sage" can help us clearly comprehend that the perfect person achieves a richer intention because with regard to Confucian morality, the sage should hold five virtues and other characteristics. And Rahner's Christological anthropology and

pneumatology deduces the theory of anonymous Christians at the same time in the research of Christological ethics. Bishop Ting works out the thought of cultural Christians that can accord with Rahner's title. In a word, from these aspects we can see that Rahner's transcendental Christology indeed has internal immediate relationship with Chinese theological thought.

3.8.5 Human Freedom and Human Right

Rahner's Christological thought has not only theological significance, but also holds the profound social significance in which, particularly in the third world and socialist countries, people have constantly struggled for their freedom, right and democracy. So why Rahner's theology can win widespread support after the Second Vatican Council is that he affirmatively believes that theological investigation thinks and concerns itself not only within human spiritual life in the church, but importantly with human social life since human beings live in a complex society and not in a vacuum of pure religion. Therefore, Rahner emphatically claims that human freedom, as the holy gift of God, is sacred and inviolable. From this view it is relevant to the popular subject of present discussion in China of "human right". For Chinese theologians, it is a knotty problem that they have had to evade, lest they might get themselves into trouble among the political hazard.

"Freedom", in the significance of theology, especially in the New Testament, is that man orientated towards God through the Holy Spirit, is relieved from the power and influence of sin, death and the ultimate selfishness. Certainly, "freedom" also has social significance. It means that in secular society man enjoys the sacred right that God endows along with human dignity. Theological freedom and social freedom have an interrelation because man cannot be

separated from spatio-temporal historical society and man in society is the symbol of God's supernatural grace. Historically, people do not correctly understand human dignity. It seems that man living in this world is expected meekly to submit to maltreatment and with the current passively restrain himself to fit the social environment; he does not courageously take up the task of God's created human beings. The church constrains Christians more than others, and seeming to only partially understand that the Kingdom of God does not belong to this world, teaches that Christians should not enjoy the right of freedom in this world and must wait real freedom with the realization of God's Kingdom, in which they completely possess the freedom of God's sons and daughters, not limited by time-space, history, secularity, material and themselves bodies, and can willingly go before God through their spiritual bodies.

However, after Christ in fact saving us, we have shared in the freedom of spirit, soul and body. Because of Christ's love we are renewed and our egos are changed making us regain God's image and likeness with which God endowed us before Adam fell. So, we are not the servants of sin and do not need secular law to constrain us, nor secular dictators putting a heavy yoke on our necks. It is seen that cherishing the Kingdom of God and realizing human freedom are not radically contradictory, and in fact accord with the Bible and doctrine. This asks that today we must take a sceptical attitude to the numerous and complicated moral rules of the church in the past and resolutely oppose the ultimate conservatism by fighting to obtain the human self-freedom which God graces.

Rahner more radically than other orthodox theologians, stresses that man possesses the holiness of freedom. He considers that if freedom is directly reflected in itself, that is, that the practice of freedom is not merely freedom, but also belongs to the absolute dignity of human

beings; otherwise if in its concrete practice it depends on the internal and external condition then within the wider field human dignity asks to use the privilege of freedom. Rahner, therefore, resolutely opposes those authoritative organizations and individuals who restrict human freedom so that human beings completely lose the privilege of free limits. Of course, when someone with his free will can do anything conceived in his mind freedom becomes a human trap. Although we must have a rule to punish this man, Rahner still insists that "because morally mistaken free decision deprives human freedom. In the association with other people depriving human freedom cannot be the task of anybody and also any human society". Thus, trying to reach human dignity and human free dignity is not merely reaching human targets—and also a part of man realizing himself—but the objectively moral mistaken decision that refuses freedom without preconditions becomes a constraint on human free limits.

Rahner analyses more widely human free limits which requires that the possibility of realizing freedom must not be merely partial to the being of numerous people, to make all dimensions extend through freedom according to the interrelation of the dimensions of human beings. In order to gain freedom we must actively exclude some special limited matters, and the freedom of other realms that absolutely try to limit prior individual freedom, because these offend the principle deriving from God and do great harm to human dignity. So, Rahner states that,

...there must be a zone of personal freedom in the sphere of economy, of the formation of communities, of the creation of objective cultural values, in the religious field, in the sphere of Christian value, whether or not these realms in particular and taken simply by themselves could 'function' sufficiently even without such a concession of freedom (*T.I. II* p. 249).

In fact, the natural moral law does not limit freedom because it after all takes natural essence as precondition and seeks help from it, which can make freedom fit for its ultimate goal, that is, human complete perfection. So St. Paul considers that the function of the law is only for

passive effect that prevents human beings from committing crime, it simply holds no threat to the real perfect man. But before the realization of God's Kingdom there should be just and reasonable law in church and society. Since there are established principles, we must have the responsibility of individual free decision. Rahner thinks that what we must endure has higher value than physical existential material safety. However, certain freedoms and the guarantee of material conditions belong to the indispensable prerequisite in individual freedom. He criticizes the one who holds that for his own safety, someone would rather lose freedom to escape from reality than dare to struggle for his freedom. It is immoral that this man escapes from freedom into the cage of only preserving his life. He argues that in order to gain freedom, human beings should dare to sacrifice themselves, likewise that human beings make unremitting fight for their necessary existential material conditions.

When the leaders and Christians of the third world church were struggling with colonists in order to recapture the national autonomous right, then in Latin American theology there arose Liberation theology, but European and American churches were not merely unconcerned with it, but attacked and persecuted those church leaders who support Liberation theology. Rahner maintains that this is the tragedy of the Catholic Church at that time in which church membership was declining. He loudly asks,

Why can Marxism attract a great following? Because Marxism can help them solve some concrete problems. Then why cannot our church help believers resolve some actual problems in the concrete historical background?" (*Our Christian Faith Answers for the Future*, p. 5)

If we still seem to be like past theologians and exegetes regarding man as only a five feet long worm then we cannot talk about human dignity and freedom. Although man is infinitely small, God has concerned and considered him all along, for on him God bestows his own image and likeness, and that includes God's dignity, freedom, holiness, love and faith etc.

Why did God send his only begotten Son, the Word become flesh into the world to save all sinners if human beings have not the value of dignity and freedom? The Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified for our sins has made us free, but the church and society, with a compulsory high-handed policy binds our dignity and freedom in a dark prison. In fact, the church and society are an inseparable integrity, so it is seen that the totalitarian system of society is usually reflected in the management of the church. Thereby, it is rather reluctant to let believers completely enjoy the holy freedom, which God has given in the church. Only when human freedom has been realized, can his nature of dignity be demonstrated in society. Generally speaking, only the church takes the exemplary vanguard role in society, she can help people (believers and unbelievers) to rid themselves of their burden of manipulation in society.

I will now devote some space to the question of Chinese human rights in which we seem to be disclosed that Rahner's theological anthropology can help Chinese theologians to think that Chinese indigenised theology must respond to the need of contemporary people who are moving into modernization, which should mean that everybody enjoys higher material life, democracy and freedom. Following the deeper economic reforms, people's material life has been gradually enhanced, and wider freedom has become the desire of every Chinese in his innermost heart. As to a human being, his essential existence should enjoy his freedom in the field of his life and work. However, in fact each person has not had the luck to live freely and usually only one part of people have the privilege to live joyfully while one part have always been manipulated and controlled by others.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, even if they had gained the right of freedom, they did not know how to use it and abused it to attack and kill one another. From the eighties,

more and more people began to be conscious that this struggle had been an unprecedented disaster, but how to make freedom return to each individual became a hot potato. The central government adjusted and softened a little its hard policy, and stated that they had given people sufficient freedom. But actually people did not get really sufficient freedom, which is a basic condition of life (e.g. freedom of speech, freedom to publish, freedom of news, freedom of demonstration, freedom of election, freedom of religious belief, freedom of assembly and association and so on). So we can understand the important reason why there appeared a democratic movement of great strength and impetus in the Spring-Summer of 1989. Perhaps this was the epitome of political Christology, for if there is not the success of the democratic movement in European countries, Chinese people hardly long for realizing democracy and freedom.

After the reforms of the economy, Chinese living conditions have constantly improved, but their spiritual life is still in the old style. They are certainly not coordinated. When the material condition is enhanced to a high degree and the spiritual condition still stands at a lower level, both must be incompatible and may conflict each other. At such a moment, the spiritual condition should immediately be improved and thus a confrontation cannot be avoided. But after the mass movement in 1989, policy was not softened, on the contrary it was tighten up again. This abnormal phenomenon is quite different when we compare with Eastern Europe and Russia.

Why was the democratic movement in China defeated when in European countries it succeeded? The key distinction is that the Orthodox Church in Russia and the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Eastern Europe were all galvanized into action to appeal and support the broad mass of people who were striving for democracy and freedom, but in China, the

religious strength was too weak on which to call, to lead a great movement on a large scale and essentially speaking, although there are some dominant religions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestant and Catholic Churches, these religions constituted the minority compared with the huge population. They also had a lower status.

After Liberation, especially during the Cultural Revolution of ten years when all religions were on the brink of extinction, since religion was regarded as superstition and opium which should be abolished under Communism. If we analyse this phenomenon in detail we can derive a picture that the Chinese Christian history is only near one hundred years in span and Christianity was regarded as "foreign religion" and so was rejected by most Chinese people, so its influence was weak in the thought of most people. On the other hand, Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism as Chinese traditional culture, religion and philosophy controlled and dominated the feudal system for more than two thousand years, but its quiet essence has been stamped with the brand of servility in each Chinese brain. Even though certain Chinese proclaims that he does not believe Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, his speaking and behaviour is always affected and constrained by these traditional thoughts.

In the feudal society of two thousand years, Confucianism became the dominant thought administering country in each dynasty. Confucianism consists of sorts of feudal ceremonies and morality, which require people to follow certain principles, like the three cardinal guides (ruler guides subject, father guides son and husband guides wife), and the five constant virtues (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity). From family to society every person is himself restricted by this feudal ceremonial religion. It is rather difficult to think, speak and perform with any freedom of the individual. In the Revolution of 1911 Dr. Sun Yatsen led the Chinese bourgeois democratic revolution to overthrow the Qing Dynasty and

to realize the policy of nation, civil rights and people's livelihood in order to win freedom for all Chinese. Following the May 4th Movement the great writer Luxun lifted high the banner of "anti-feudalism" which awoke most people who were bonded in the shackles of feudalism.

However, after Liberation, Chairman Mao destroyed the right of individual freedom so as to achieve his ambition of "new emperor". So long as people render the words of democracy and freedom, they would be regarded as class enemies and be suppressed, as victims of dictatorship. Thus, people stand in this environment in which the magistrates are free to burn down houses, while the common people are forbidden to light lamps. It is possible for us to imagine that people are forced to keep their resentment to themselves until the reforms of the economy in 1979, in which Mr. Deng called on people to freely make money in any way.

Can we confirm that today's Chinese problem of the freedom of the individual has been resolved? At least at present we can hear a news item about some dissident are who is suddenly missing; a certain free preacher who does not have the official certificate is arrested; a certain Christian meeting point which is not permitted by the government goes underground; a certain pious and religious believer is mocked, struck and threatened by higher authority; a certain minister is sentenced in prison because for political reasons and so on. Things of this kind are emerging one after another. Although the Voice of America and B.B.C. often attack the Chinese government, even some western countries carry out the policy of economic sanctions, it seems that all external interference has no effect on the hard rule of the present government that sticks to its old way of doing everything.

Of course we cannot affirmatively decide that the present China as a block of seamless steel will not any change. Following the flourishing Christian development, more and more people

come into the church to seek for the truth, and it is the truth to make people free. Until that day in the future, when people are all awakened by the truth which Jesus Christ teaches, and they will recognize and share with the beginning of God's creation and yet it does not come from some powerful persons who always want to occupy and control this gift. Christ has set human beings free, and the Chinese should join the line of free people too. If Chinese people are precisely transformed to stride into the tide of modernization then they must completely understand the real meaning of human dignity and freedom that Rahner has synthetically analysed and comprehensively elucidated in the realm of religion, and also in the realm of society.

Epilogue

At present there is no one theology of Christology, rather a number of theories that include:

- Fundamentalism or conservative evangelism, which insists that Jesus Christ's divinity is more important than his humanity
- Radical modern Liberalism which, claiming that Jesus Christ possesses only perfect humanity, replaces Christcentric thought with Theocentric
- New evangelism which maintains two natures of Jesus Christ and puts a balance to his work; his humanity concerned for human beings in the world and his divinity connected with the eschatological future of all creatures.

There is considerable controversy over the differing theologies and individuals will have their own views on the relevance of each, considering some more important and correct than others. The main points of some liberal theologies will be highlighted to demonstrate how they are linked with and affect secularism then, in considering which Christology is best suited to the needs of contemporary Chinese Christians, I will draw on the practice of the Chinese Church.

In western theology many liberal theologians, having investigated the relationship of Christianity with other religions, conclude that Christianity is not privileged but merely equal with other religions. This view of religious plurality, which radically opposes fundamentalism, can perhaps help us acquire more knowledge as revealed by God himself, understand the rich truth and grace of God in the cosmos, and make us tolerate other secular cultures and religions. However, it also introduces many questions on which Christians need to reflect. For example is Christianity the only universal truth? Is there salvation outside the church? Is Jesus Christ simply another religious leader on a level with the leaders of other religions such as Buddha, Mohammed and Confucius?

Schleiermacher, the 18th century father of modern theology, claims Christianity is the most complete revelation of God. God reveals himself in Jesus Christ who alone has the absolute dependent feeling of God and who clearly and purely brings God-consciousness to expression. According to him,

Christianity is a monotheistic faith of the teleological type of religion, and essentially distinguished from other such faiths by the fact that everything in it is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth (*The Christian Faith* [11], p. 52).

Schleiermacher delivers Jesus Christ's humanity from the fossilized accretions of doctrine but nowadays some radical Liberals completely deny his divinity and claim the pure historical Jesus was no different from other humans. Thus, in their eyes Christianity has lost its central position and has become one of many religions in God's cosmic family. In their view therefore, salvation is possible through other religions or cultures.

Kierkegaard, the nineteenth century father of existentialism, considers that research of the historical Jesus was not completely reliable, and even if reliable was irrelevant. For him the core of faith depended on human subjective choice and transcendental belief:

If our contemporary can say, 'we believe that in a certain year God took the very nature of a humble servant and appeared among us, teaching us and finally dying among us'. This is enough. We require no heritage besides this (*Philosophical Fragments*, p. 130)

So Kierkegaard dares put his whole life as a bet on the "if" and his faith is tested by everyday practice, but he affirmatively believes that he lives in the paradox grace of God. Although he transparently penetrates human experience of existence, on the other side he omits the truth of the Gospel, which the disciples propagated as the foundation of Christianity.

Bultmann emphasizes kerygma, and is called the Baur of the twentieth century as they both share a sceptical attitude to the historical value of the Bible, but Baur advocates idealism and Bultmann urges existentialism. Bultmann firstly denies the source of the Gospel as being from Jesus himself but rather a story fabricated by early Christians for their own needs, thus he does not recognize Jesus as a historical figure who existed in a particular space and time. Secondly, he explains the meaning of the Gospel through existentialism, claiming Jesus was not the Word but merely the propagator of the Word who calls people to recognize the meaning of their existence. Thirdly, in his later life he radically insists that the whole New Testament is myth and a mixture of Gnosticism and Judaism, claiming that the message of Christianity must be clarified from myth (demythologisation). Bultmann considers that myth is the obstructive stone of accepting the Gospel for modern human beings. He suggests many New Testament concepts, such as virgin birth, empty tomb, resurrection and ascension etc. are difficult to accept.

Bultmann's radical historical scepticism is not without critics, for example Prof. David Cairns argues that his theology "may be fairly described as a gospel without the gospels" (*A Gospel Without Myth?* p.87), and Prof. Reginald H. Fuller criticizes, Bultmann's demythologising aims at interpreting existentially the New Testament message:

...may it not be that in practice, despite this oft-repeated intention, he does not eliminate those parts of the New Testament message which are not susceptible of existential interpretation?...He cannot hold out any real content in Christian hope, for this would be 'false objectifying'. He cannot really say anything about the destiny either of the individual or of the cosmos, even in the most refined theological term. Indeed, the whole New Testament conception of cosmic redemption refuses to pass through the sieve of existential interpretation, and must therefore in practice be eliminated (*The New Testament in Current Study*, pp. 29-30).

However, as we shall see, other radical theologians, such as John Robinson, support certain parts of Bultmann's theology.

Bultmann and others, including A. Schweitzer, investigated the life of the historical Jesus, but their Gospel interpretation was dependent on existentialism. Following their lead P. Tillich permeated his theology with existential terminology such as God is "what concerns us ultimately," "being itself," "the power of being," and "the ground of being"; "Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of the New Being." Because of human beings' estrangement from being the bearer of the New Being, God overcomes the estrangement and links human beings with the ground of being again. Tillich radically denies the historical reality of Gospel record, but accepts the Christ whom St Peter confessed as a factual element of the Christian faith. As he says,

Faith cannot even guarantee the name 'Jesus' in respect of him who was the Christ. It must leave that to the incertitude of our historical knowledge. But faith does guarantee the factual transformation of reality in that personal life which the New Testament expresses in its picture of Jesus as the Christ (*Systematic Theology*, II, p. 123).

Tillich abandons traditional doctrine and replaces it with his own brand of existentialism (which complemented Hegel's absolute spirit of the 19th century). His thought leads to a separation of the Christ of faith from the Jesus of history. However, we must question whether, having lost the evidence of biblical history, the Christian faith can be sustained in a constantly evolving and developing society.

Bonhoeffer's secularisation of Christianity rings a warning bell to conservative traditional religion. At Tegel Prison (during Nazi rule in Germany), he reflected on the religious view of God arguing that the modern world has undergone a process of secularisation and cast off the garment of "religion", by which he meant the individualistic concern for the salvation of one's own soul, or the metaphysical interpretation of a "God" beyond the world who can be called upon and used when convenient. According to Bonhoeffer the real living God, who is

suffering and weak, overcomes all other powers in the world and space. According to the Bible, God suffers with us in the midst of everyday life and helps us by becoming weak in the world (Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross) in order that we might become strong. In Bonhoeffer's words, "Before God and with God we live without God"; explains this view:

He (Man) must therefore really live in the godless world, without attempting to gloss over or explain its ungodliness in some religious way or other. He must live a 'secular' life, and thereby share in God's sufferings. He may live a 'secular' life (as one who has been freed from false religious obligations and inhibitions). To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, to make something of oneself (a sinner, a penitent, or a saint) on the basis of some method or other, but to be a man----not a type of man, but the man that Christ creates in us. It is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life (*Letters and Papers From Prison*, p. 198).

Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity" does not deny and damage Christianity, but breaks out of the chains of a religious form in order to attract and encourage Christians concerned for and participating in the actual world, rather than those who escape and retire from secular life, because God suffers for all human beings. Bonhoeffer's thought strongly influences two modern European theologians; firstly J. Moltmann who has brought Bonhoeffer's (which incorporates Luther's) theology of the cross into the heart of his doctrine of the triune God. The second is E. Jungel who has utilized Bonhoeffer's notion of the crucified God in his debate with modern atheism. Of course Bonhoeffer's suffering God has been actively supported and supplemented by other Liberation theology, e.g. the Latin American theology of Gustavo Gutierrez, North American Black theology of James H. Cone, Feminist W. de Druchy. Some radicals, however, seem to misunderstand Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity" and extend his thoughts at tangents; for example the "God-is-dead" theology of Thomas T. Altizer and William Hamilton and the Secularisation theology of Paul van Buren and Harvey Cox.

J. A. T. Robinson, the former Bishop of Woolwich, introduces the concept of a God radically different from that envisaged by a fundamentalist biblical concept, and his famous work, *Honest to God*, forces orthodox Christians to reflect deeply on their understanding of God. Robinson's opinion builds on Bultmann's demythologisation, Tillich's ground of being, and Bonhoeffer's religionless Christianity. Robinson finds certain difficulties with Bultmann's approach, such as his scientific dogmatism, historical scepticism and his heavy reliance on existentialism. Despite these observations, he persistently supports Bultmann's position, "If he is right, the entire conception of a supernatural order which invades and 'perforates' this one must be abandoned. Thus, the Bishop surprises himself and states "But if so, what do we mean by God, by revelation, and what becomes of Christianity?" (*Honest to God*, p. 24).

Robinson also supports Tillich's idea of God as the depth and ground of all being:

...that depth is what the word GOD means... if you know that God means depth, you know much about him, you cannot then call yourself an atheist and unbeliever... He who knows about depth knows God" (*The Shaking of the Foundations*, p. 63).

Robinson says,

God... is not projection 'out there', an Other beyond the skies, of whose existence we have to convince ourselves, but the Ground of our very being (*Honest to God*, p. 22).

What God was, the Word was. Robinson believes that "if one looked at Jesus, one saw God", and describes him as a "window into God at work", (*ibid.*, p. 71) "the most God-like man that ever lived... is clearly not what the New Testament is saying" (*ibid.*, pp. 68-69). He ironically analyses the incarnation (non-Biblical term): "It conjures up the idea of a divine substance being plunged in flesh and coated with it like chocolate or silver plating" (*ibid.*, p. 66).

Quoting Paul Tillich, he agrees,

In the picture of Jesus as the Christ we have the picture of a man who possesses these qualities, a man who, therefore, can be called the medium of final revelation" (*Systematic Theology* I, p. 148).

Robinson concludes that Jesus who became the reveller of the Father's glory is "simple love", "For it is in making himself nothing, in his utter self-surrender to others in love, that he discloses and lays bare the Ground of man's being as love" (*Honest to God*, p. 75).

Has Robinson's speculation consummated a new Christology after overthrowing the old tradition? His two main conceptions "Ground-of-Being" and "love is ultimate" questioned by others. Alan Richardson debates:

The new theology diverts our attention from the real evidence for the belief that there is a God of love. That evidence is historical... Once we grasp the character of Christian truth as historical rather than philosophical (whether speculative or existentialist), many of the confusions that have driven some theologians to seek shelter in the Ground-of-Being will begin to clear away. The general idea which most people have of God will be seen to need definition, not abolition (*Four Anchors from the Stern*, p. 9).

E. Brunner has also pointed out that this conception obscures the Biblical concept of God:

The God who speaks to us and who in this sense is personal is not identical with 'Being', however true it may be that the notion of unconditional Being is a part of the Biblical concept of God... It is not the revelation of true Being that is proclaimed to us in the Gospel, but God's gracious approach to us, the rebels (*Dogmatics* III, pp. 220-222).

It is because God is the ground of being and simple love, that Robinson urges us to get rid of a personal God in which traditional Christianity believes:

By this, a supreme Person, a self-existent subject of infinite goodness and power, who enters into a relationship with us comparable with that of one human personality with another (*Honest to God*, p. 48).

Since the location of God is without "up there" or "out there", Robinson extracts from Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity" that "Man has learned to cope with all questions of

importance without recourse to God is a working hypothesis," "and the only way to be honest is to recognize that we have to live in a world *est deus non daretur*. Robinson interprets this development as,

...children outgrowing the secure religious, moral and intellectual framework of the home, in which 'Daddy' is always there in the background (*ibid.*, p. 39).

Robinson wants to eliminate the religious God instead of human beings in the secular world. But Bonhoeffer never intended to take the concept of God away from Christianity, merely to restore the real image of God through,

...an abandonment of a false conception of God, and a clearing of the decks for the God of the Bible, who conquers power and space in the world by his weakness (Letters and Papers from Prison, p. 122).

Because of the world or humankind having come of age more godless, Bonhoeffer warns us that "God cannot be used as a stop-gap", but that "he must be found at the centre of life", "the ground for this lies in the revelation of God in Christ" with whom we must share in the sufferings of God in the secular life. In his reflection Bonhoeffer experiences the sufferings with God in a small cell of prison as a sheer obedient servant as a sheep before its Shearer.

Bishop Robinson's radical religionless theory was intensively criticized and attacked by scholars and laymen in Christianity. The shaking theological controversy is recorded in *The Honest to God Debate* (ed. D. Edwards, 1963), *Keep Yourself from Idols* (J. I. Packer, 1963), *Image Old and New* (Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, 1963), *Honesty and God* (M. Morrison, 1966), *The Secularisation of Christianity* (E. L. Mascall, 1965) and many other theological and philosophical books. For instance, Alasdair McIntyre argues of Robinson,

...his book testifies to the existence of a whole group of theologies which have retained a theistic vocabulary but acquired an atheistic substance" (Honest to God Debate, p. 223).

J. I. Packer claims,

...if Robinsonianism is accepted, the faith of the Apostles' Creed is rejected. No good can come of obscuring this. This is simply saying that Robinsonianism is, in effect, not a brand of Christianity at all, but a sort of idolatry----a new paganism (*Keep Yourself from Idols*, p. 14).

The well-known Catholic theologian L. Mascall seriously attacks Robinson's position, as he writes,

My complaint against him, after making a detailed examination of his book, is that the programme which he sets forth, in so far as it is consistent at all, so far from transforming the secularised world in which we live by transfusing into it the redemptive power of Christ, would simply reduce Christianity to a condition of impotence by conforming it to the pattern of the secularised world" (*The Secularisation of Christianity*, p. 178).

The result is that Robinson himself had to accept "I do not fully understand, myself, all that I am trying to say". But actually he never did express and speak of it clearly, because he consistently interprets that Jesus Christ was not just a man in *The Human Face of God*.

Although Robinson never denies the existence of God, his concept of God loses the image of a Christian substantial God who is Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer, also personal Lover, Brother and Companion, embodied and revealed through the historical Jesus Christ. His well-known words, "God is not a projection 'out there', an Other beyond the skies, of who existence we have to convince ourselves," suggests a negative meaning to that of a transcendent God. Other theologians develop Robinson's concept of God, for example, Anthony Freeman, of the Church of England absolutely denies the existence of God and publicly proclaims that he does not believe in God. In *God with Us* he writes, "There is nothing out there--or if there is, we

can have no knowledge of it." His views led to his dismissal as a priest in the Anglican Church in July 1994 by Dr Eric Kemp, Bishop of Chichester.

It can be seen therefore that in western society there are some theologians, theological professors and clergy who do not believe in the traditional God. To counter this it should be pointed out that many still do believe in God and all of western Christianity is not radically liberal.

Nowadays the world is being secularised by materialism Epicureanism and sexual-liberalism. The traditional concept of God is regarded as myth, legend and even as a superstition. This view is evidenced in the New Testament research of some radical modern scholars' such as: Palestinian Aramaic Christology, Hellenistic Jewish Christology, Samaritan Gnostic Christology and Gentile Christology. Thus, leads to the consequence that more and more people (including some Christians) have difficulty in believing and accepting the definition of Chalcedon in which Jesus Christ possesses the true perfect divine nature and the true perfect human nature. It is conveniently appropriate for them that Jesus was a pure human being the same as them, because this concept (which is not new, in the early church there were Ebionite and Adoptionist) is emphasized in order to suit the secularisation. On the other hand, it is a stumbling-stone that prevents some who want to become Christian from entering the church. This is why the phenomenon exists that many big grand churches have changed into antique and some so-called holy lands have become secular gardens.

The challenge of secularisation in Christianity has peaked at the end of the twentieth century. How should we respond to the attack on orthodox doctrine? Which kind of Christology is

now appropriate? What will we tell the new generation about Christianity? Will Christianity be superfluous for the materialized world in the twenty first century?

Perhaps Chinese traditional culture can bring some new vivid vigour to the thinking of Christianity. The mysterious Tao of Taoism and the personal Heaven of Confucianism provide more abounding meanings for the thought of Christology.

As we discussed in the Part Two of this essay, explained the Word with Tao and Heaven maybe has more significant meanings than Logos in Hellenistic culture. Although Tao or Heaven come from the source of ancient religion, undergoing many changes over several thousand years, up to now they are still the subject of worship and pursue for Chinese and also the highest philosophical category in Chinese philosophy. It is this reason that since the twentieth century, more and more western thinkers have turned their eyes to Chinese traditional culture, especially the thoughts of Confucianism and Taoism. The great, modern theologian, Hans Küng has begun the dialogue between the Western theological thinking and the Chinese religious thinking. In the book of *Chinese Religions and Christianity*, he considers that the Chinese religious thinking can help Chinese understand Christianity more easily, for we cannot deny that God can demonstrate his truth, goodness and beauty for other humans outside Judaism and Christianity. Only through the communication of different cultures, this can enrich the truth of Christ more perfect and more abundant. In the process of modernization and secularisation, we, as Christians can still keep the pure faith and practise the holy love of God (the benevolence) and let Christian spirituality and morality impulse a new great survival in the new millennium.

The world is still filled with various sufferings and disasters, by national war, racial conflict, inhuman constriction, terrorism and depressed human rights, lack of democracy and so on. These serious problems that threaten to destroy God's creation should be the concern of Christianity. We should reject the view of old conservative fundamentalism, indifferent to worldly society and focussing on individual salvation. Of course, it is impossible to support the position of the radical liberalism that overstates the human Jesus who was merely a historical hero and a religious leader. However, we should understand that the Gospel includes two aspects of the vision of Jesus Christ; one is about his helping the physical and existential need of the patients, the poor, the abandoned and the depressed; at the same time he bore all human sinful burden when he went up to Golgotha, where he was crucified so as to save humankind and allow them to enter into the Kingdom of God. Here we see the perspective that the triune God creates, sustains and protects all creatures in history, and the cosmos through the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ's love, which displays God's ultimate concern for human beings (the integral being consisting of body, soul and spirit).

Therefore the hermeneutics of theology must similarly emphasize Christ's double role; caring for those who live in the world, yet at the same time deeply concerned for their souls in God's Kingdom. In the process of secularisation, Christianity should explore its capability to correct and guide human beings where and how to go. The way to achieve this is to lift high the name of Jesus Christ who will lead and keep us in our travel through life, because if he is lifted up then everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. If every Christian could imitate and incarnate the image of Jesus Christ in secularised society, the world would change for the better. Christians must participate in the suffering of the crucified God in their lives and try to move godless human beings into changing their hard-heartedness through the love of Christ's sufferings. The Christological message that should be promoted therefore is this;

Jesus Christ alone is our present and eschatological dependence and hope.

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